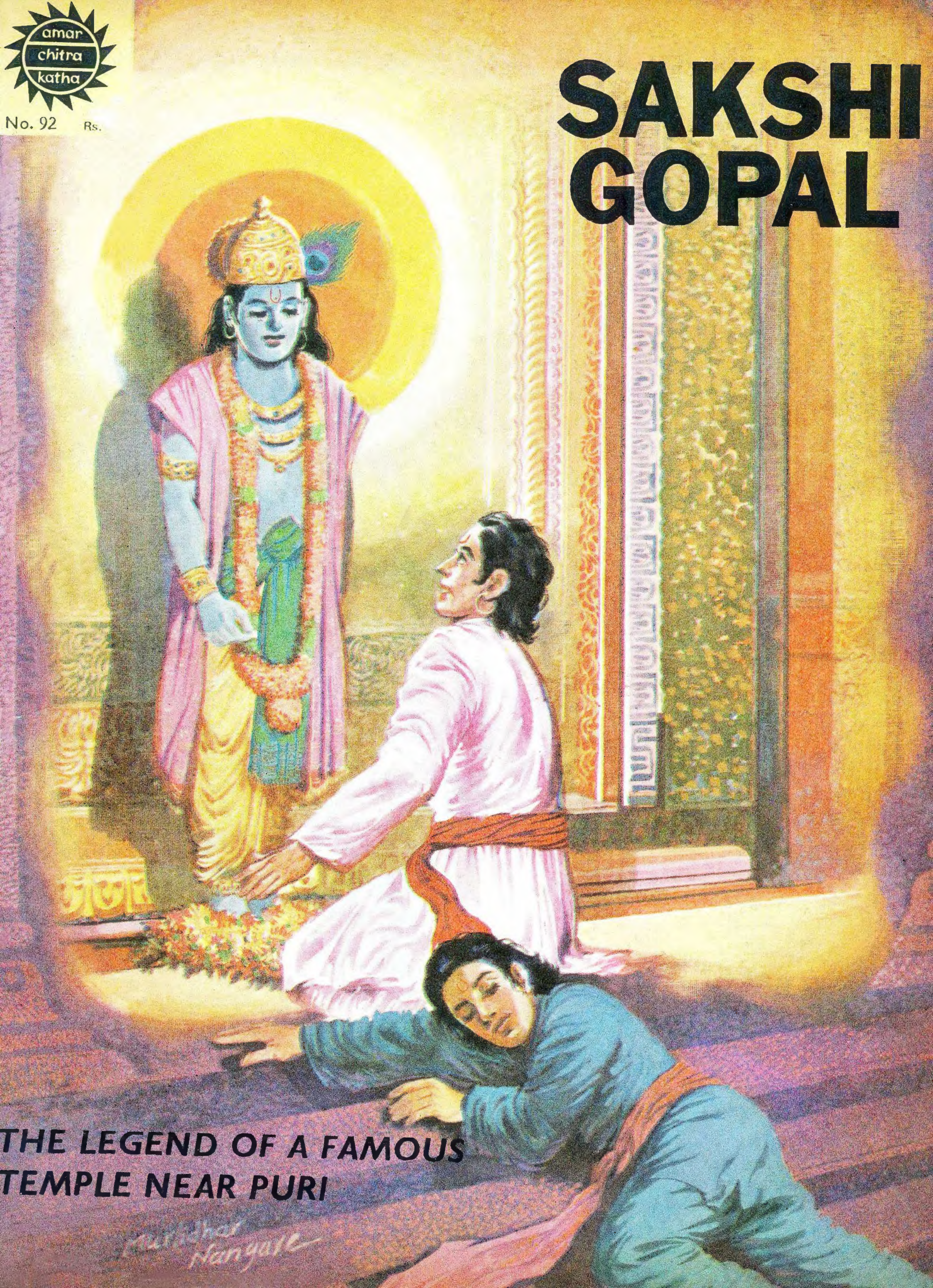
amar chitra katha

No. 92 Rs.

SAKSHI GOPAL



THE LEGEND OF A FAMOUS TEMPLE NEAR PURI

Not far from Puri in Orissa stands the temple of Sakshi Gopal. Centuries have gone by but the legend that gave the deity this name is still popular, not only in the states of Orissa and the adjoining Andhra Pradesh but in other parts of our country as well.

Sakshi Gopal was worshipped in a temple in Andhra Pradesh for a long time. Then a king of Orissa brought him to the present site.

The hero of our story loved a girl of his own village. But he was poor and the girl's father avaricious. Fate placed the father in a situation from which our hero rescued him. The father was pleased and promised the young man the hand of his daughter. The only witness to this offer was the deity, the promise being made in front of his temple.

Once he is back safe in his village, the father not taking into account this "witness", denies the promise to our hero.

Alone and forlorn, our hero implores the deity to testify to his claim that the man's daughter had indeed been promised to him.

How the deity comes to his rescue and helps him win his bride is the legend colourfully retold in our Amar Chitra Katha.

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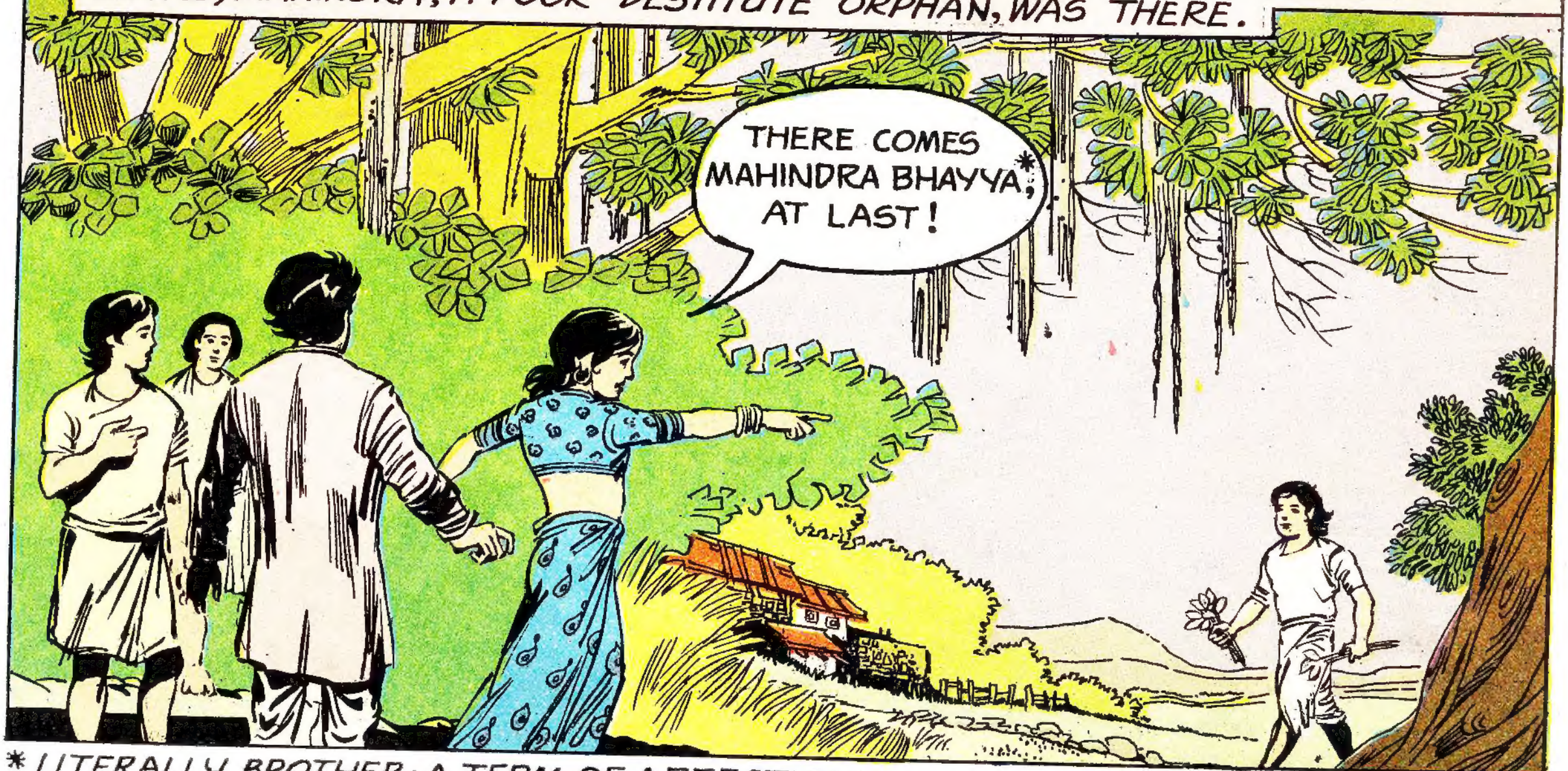
SAKSHIGOPAL

LONG LONG AGO, IN A SMALL VILLAGE LIVED RAGHAV AND RADHABAI. THEIR ONLY CHILD, VASANTI, WAS A SWEET LITTLE GIRL WITH WHOM THE OTHER CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE LOVED TO PLAY.

BUT VASANTI WOULD NEVER BEGIN A GAME WITHOUT HER FAVOURITE PLAY-MATE, MAHINDRA, A POOR DESTITUTE ORPHAN, WAS THERE.



* LITERALLY BROTHER; A TERM OF AFFECTION

WHY ARE YOU LATE?

I WENT TO BRING THESE FLOWERS FOR YOU FROM THE POND OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE.

I WAS WAITING FOR YOU TO COME AND PLUCK SOME GUAVAS FOR ME.

MAHINDRA IS SO HELPFUL!

ONLY TO VASANTI. HE NEVER REFUSES HER ANYTHING.

WHAT HE SAID WAS TRUE. MAHINDRA WAS ALWAYS PARTIAL TO VASANTI.

MAHINDRA, WILL YOU TAKE US TO THE LAKE?

WHY NOT! COME. LET'S GO.

THE CHILD VASANTI SOON GREW UP TO BE A DEMURE YOUNG WOMAN.

ONE DAY, THE VILLAGE NURSE CAME TO SEE HER MOTHER.

RADHABAI, WHY DON'T YOU GET VASANTI MARRIED TO MAHINDRA? HE IS A GOOD BOY AND HAS ALWAYS LIKED HER.

MEANWHILE THE VILLAGE ASTROLOGER MET RAGHAV.

BHAYYA! I HAVE AN ELIGIBLE BRIDEGROOM IN MIND FOR VASANTI. COME TO MY HOUSE AND WE'LL TALK IT OVER.

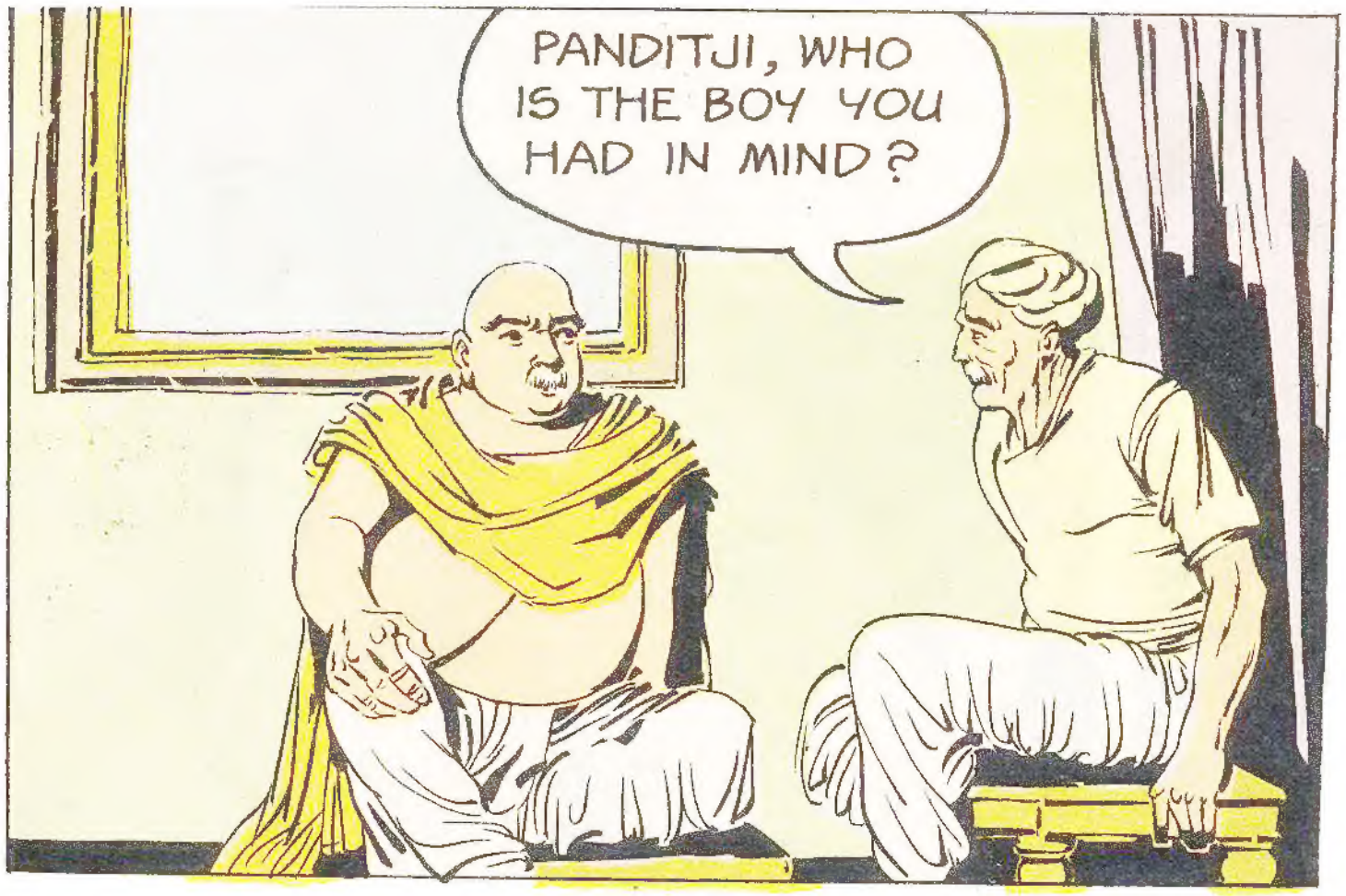
WHEN RAGHAV CAME HOME–

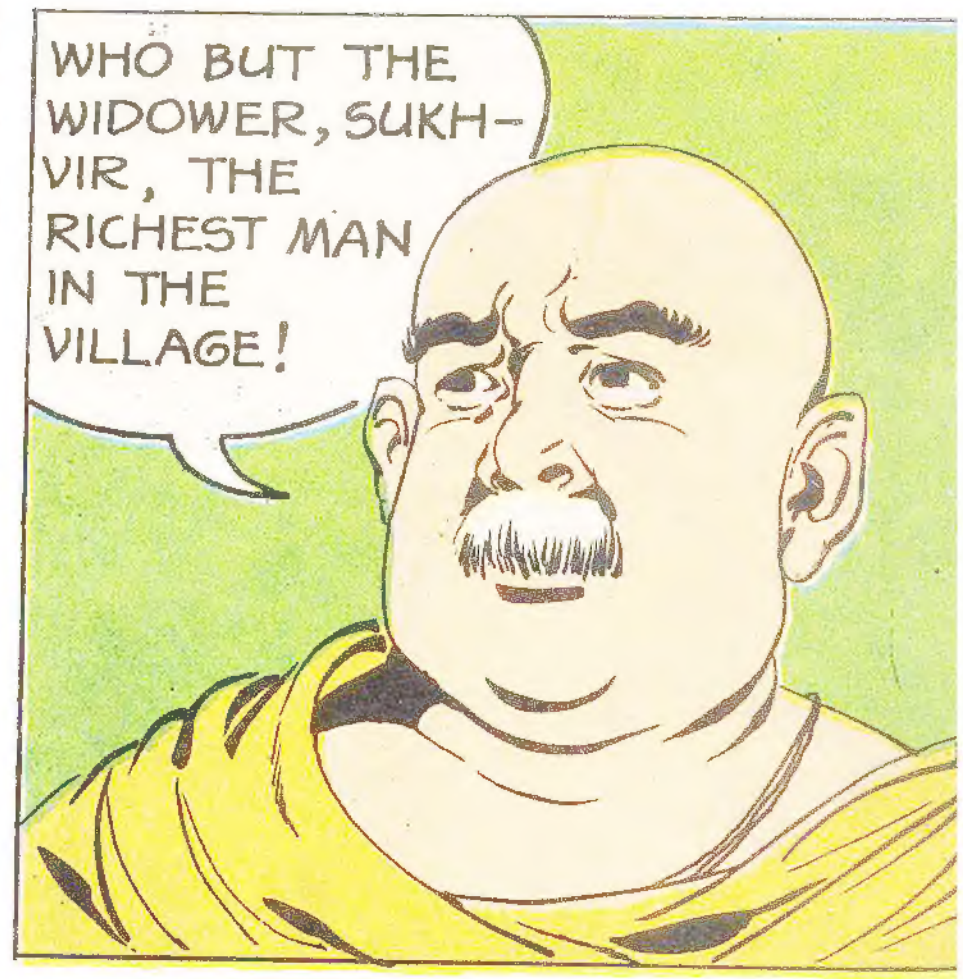
OUR ASTROLOGER WANTS TO TALK TO ME ABOUT VASANTI'S MARRIAGE. BEFORE I MEET HIM I'D LIKE TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY SUITABLE BOY IN MIND.

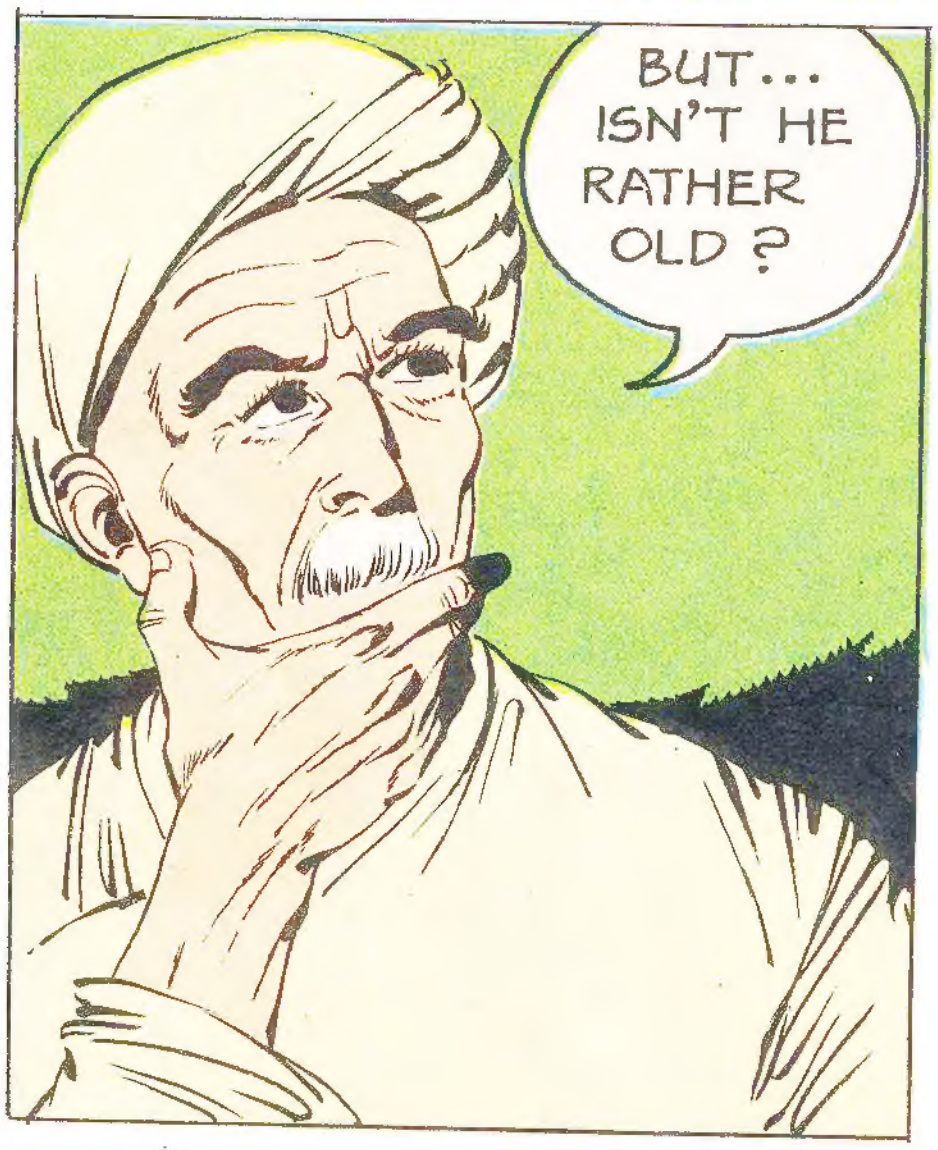
I HAVE NOT THOUGHT OF ANYBODY. BUT OUR VILLAGE NURSE SAYS MAHINDRA IS A GOOD MATCH.

WHAT! MAHINDRA OF ALL BOYS! THAT DESTITUTE ORPHAN LAD!

HOW COULD YOU EVER THINK OF GIVING OUR DAUGHTER TO HIM! I SHALL SEE WHOM THE ASTROLOGER SUGGESTS.

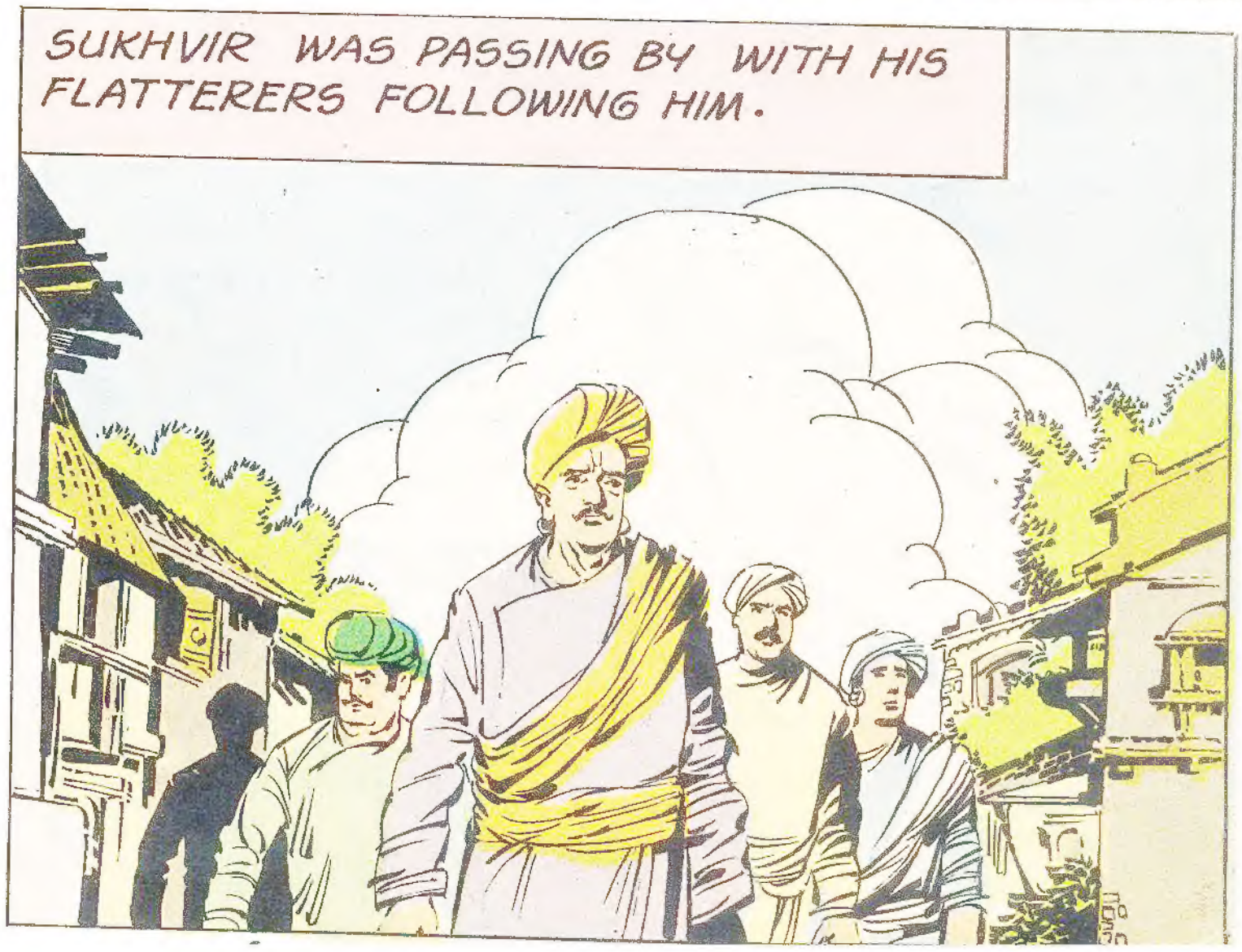

PANDITJI, WHO IS THE BOY YOU HAD IN MIND?


WHO BUT THE WIDOWER, SUKH-VIR, THE RICHEST MAN IN THE VILLAGE!


BUT... ISN'T HE RATHER OLD?

SO WHAT? DOESN'T HIS GOLD MORE THAN MAKE UP FOR IT?

LOOK, THERE HE GOES —LIKE A KING!


SUKHVIR WAS PASSING BY WITH HIS FLATTERERS FOLLOWING HIM.

MEANWHILE MAHINDRA MET VASANTI ONE EVENING.

I HAVE COME TO SAY FAREWELL. I'M LEAVING FOR THE TEMPLE TOWN TO MAKE A LIVING.

VASANTI, AT ONCE SAD AND SHY, REMAINED SPEECHLESS...

...AND MAHINDRA QUIETLY WALKED AWAY.

A FEW DAYS LATER, SUKHVIR MET RAGHAV.

RAGHAVJI, I AM PREPARING TO GO ON A PILGRIMAGE TO GOPALJI'S TEMPLE AT THE HOLY TOWN. PANDITJI AND A FEW OTHER VILLAGERS WILL BE GOING WITH ME. WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME WITH US?

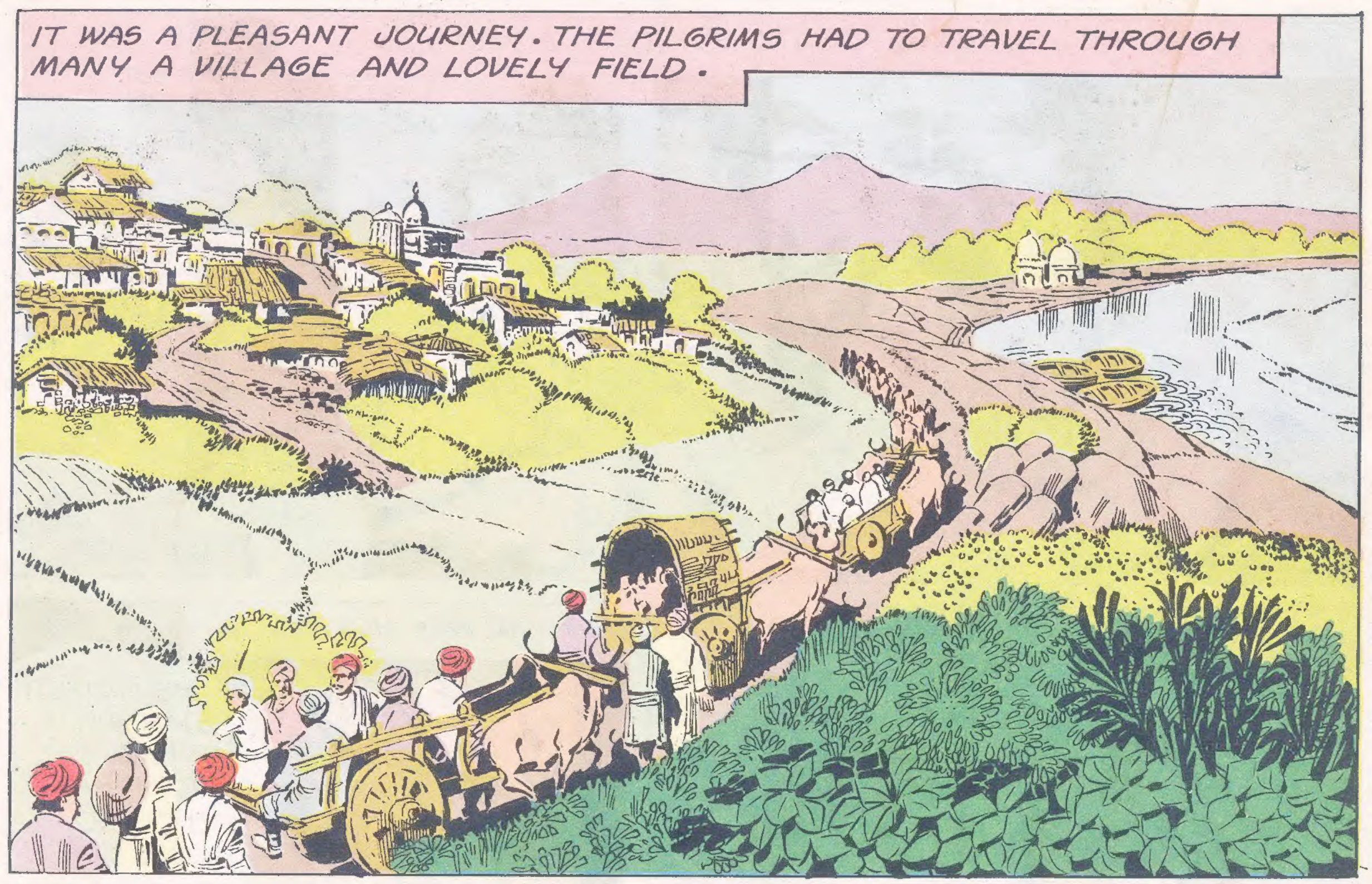
I WOULD CONSIDER IT A PRIVILEGE!

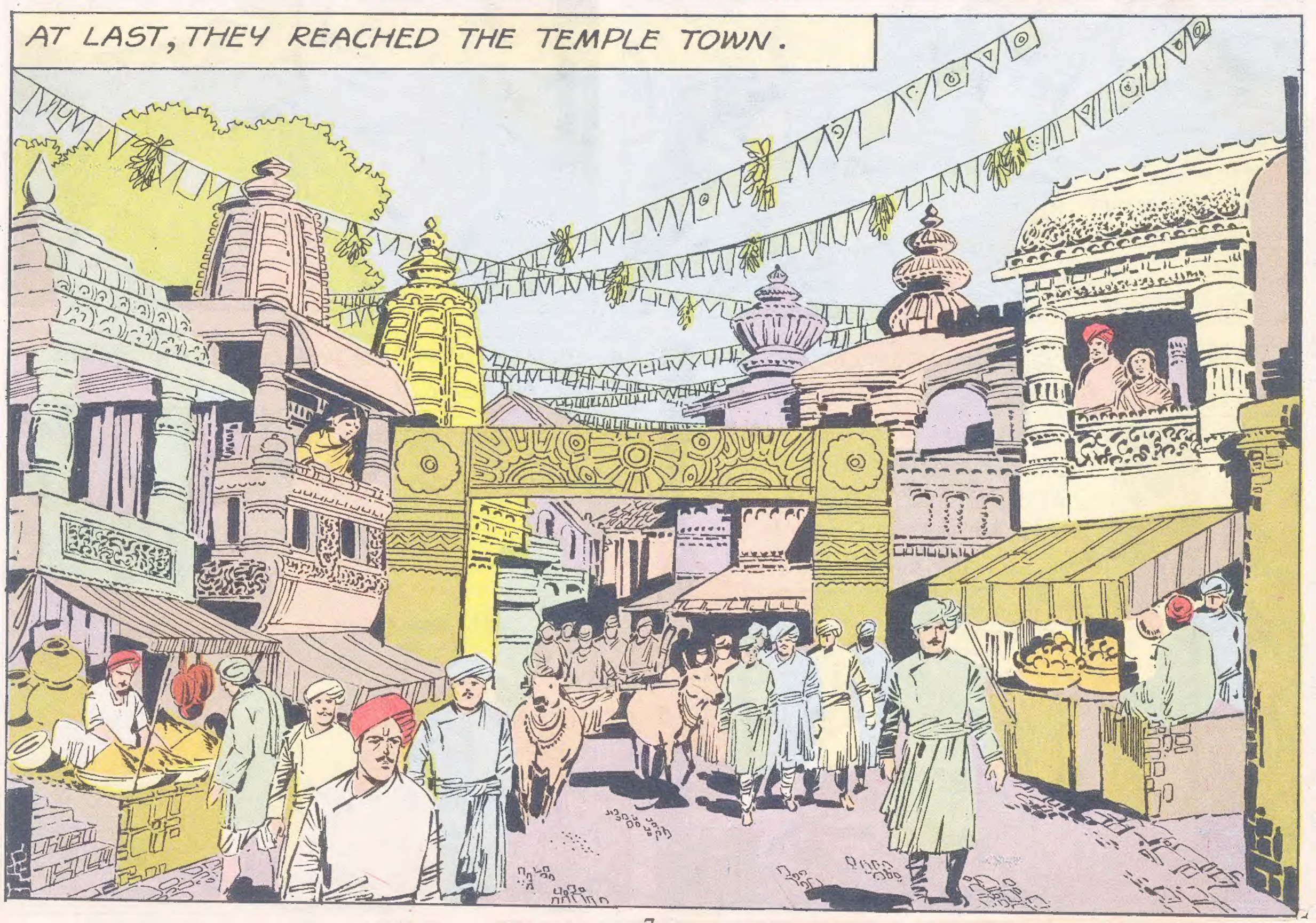
RAGHAV WAS OVERJOYED.

EVEN BEFORE HE HAS BECOME MY SON-IN-LAW, HE IS GENEROUS TO ME!

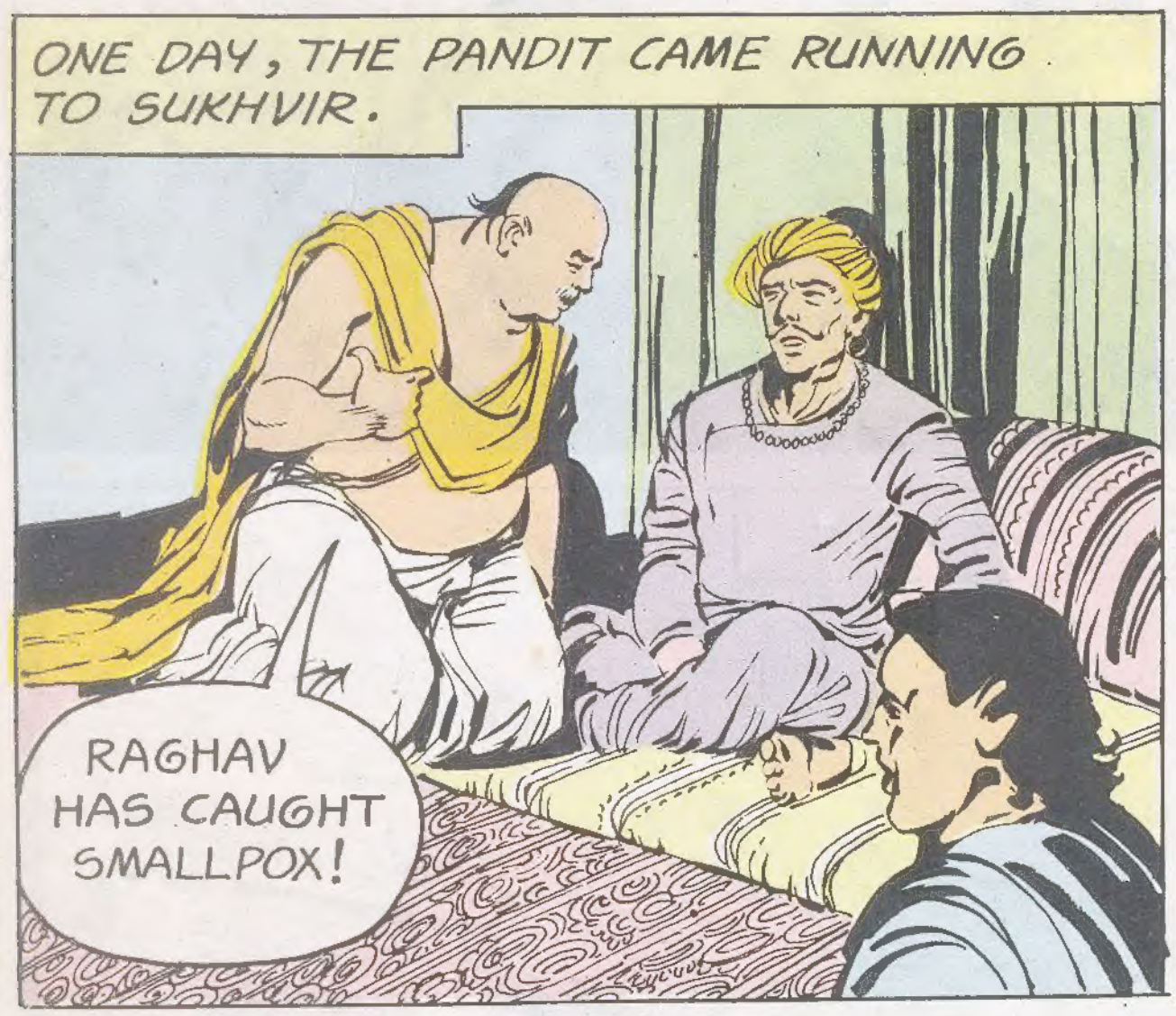
ON THE APPOINTED DAY, RAGHAV LEFT HOME WITH THE PILGRIMS.

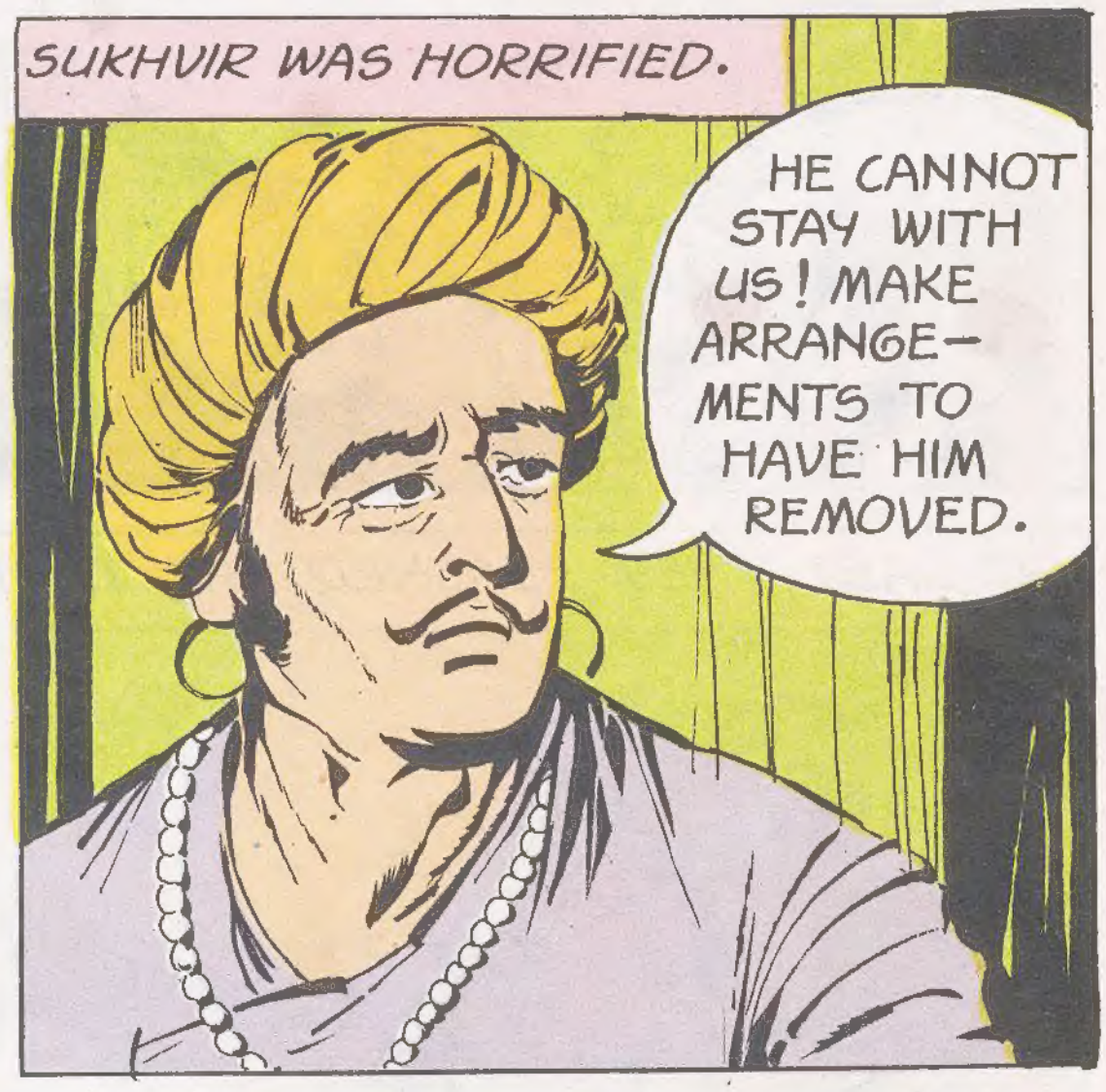
AS SOON AS WE RETURN, VASANTI WILL BE MARRIED

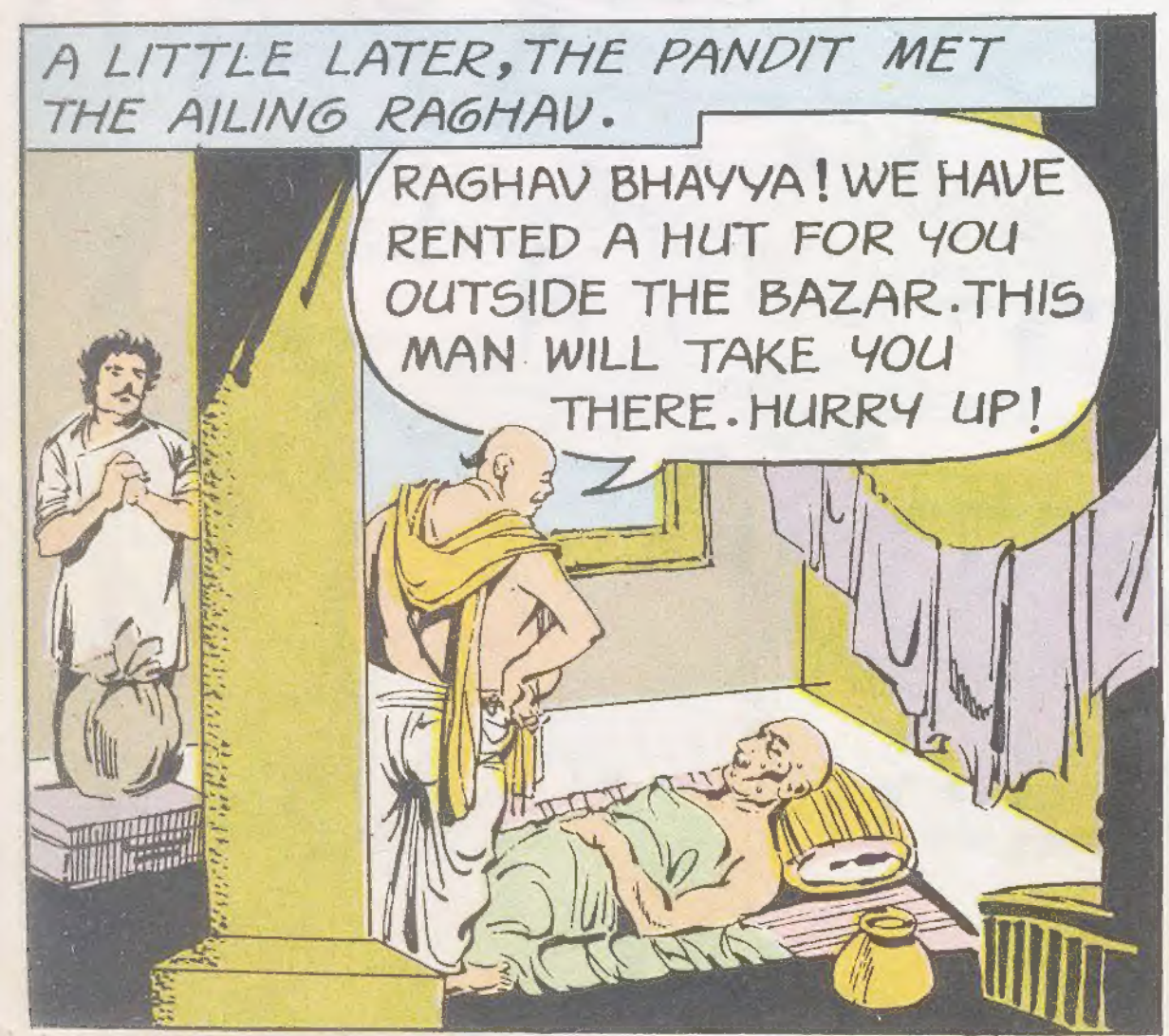

IT WAS A PLEASANT JOURNEY. THE PILGRIMS HAD TO TRAVEL THROUGH MANY A VILLAGE AND LOVELY FIELD.

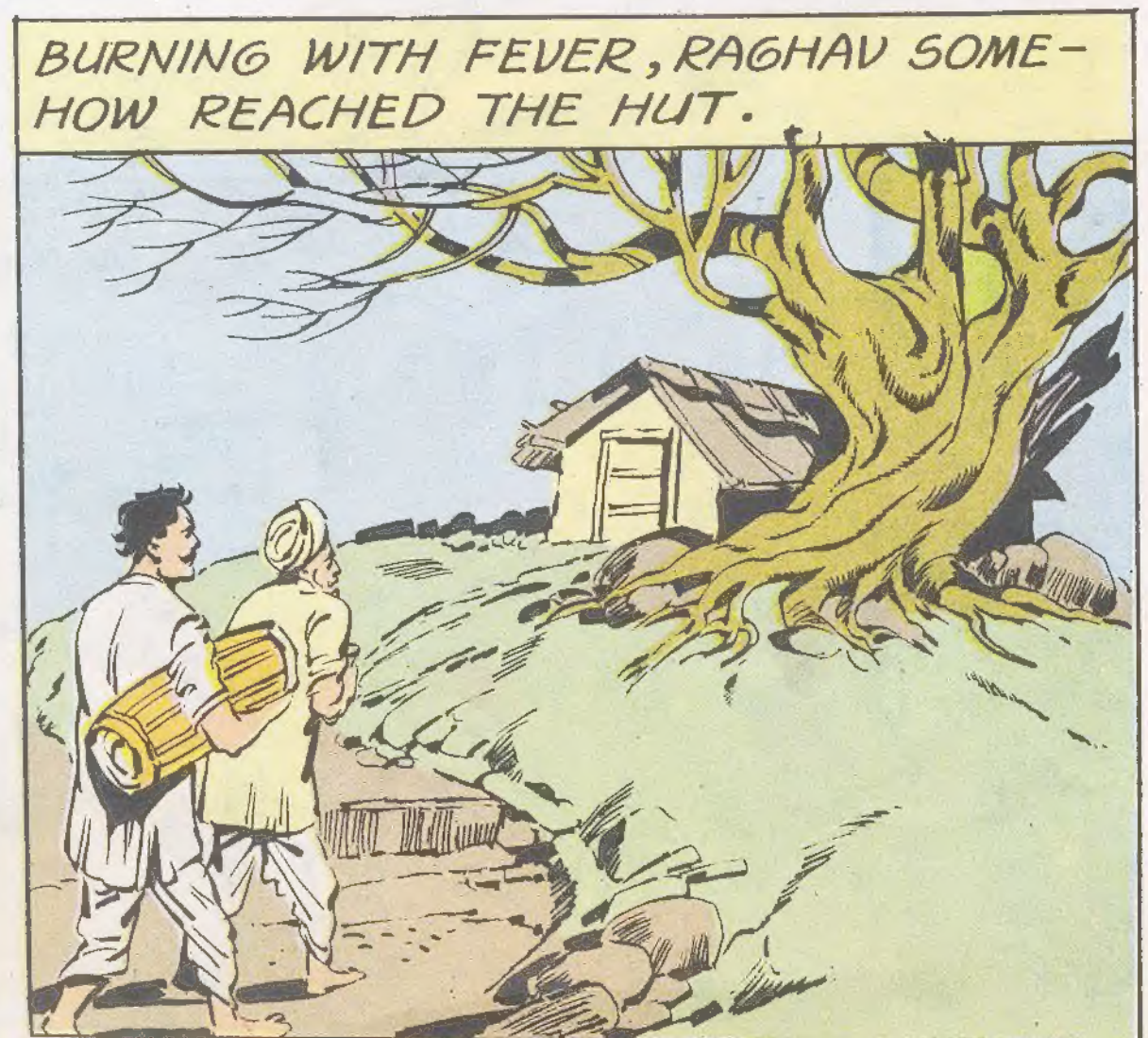

AT LAST, THEY REACHED THE TEMPLE TOWN.

THEY PUT UP AT A DHARMASHALA* CLOSE TO THE TEMPLE.







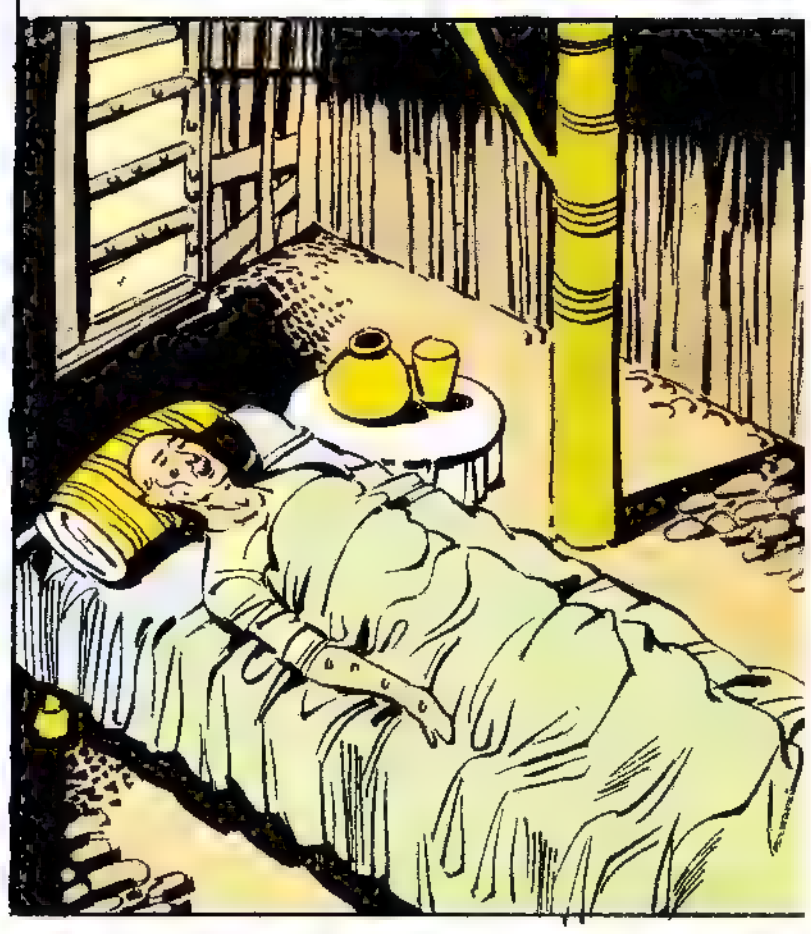


MEANWHILE, MAHINDRA, WHO WAS IN THE SAME TOWN, MET A MEMBER OF SUKHVIR'S PARTY.

HOW PLEASED I AM TO MEET YOU! HOW IS VASANTI?

WHY DON'T YOU ASK RAGHAVJI? HE TOO, HAS COME. BUT HE IS VERY ILL.

RAGHAV SUFFERED ALONE IN A DARK, DESERTED HUT.



DON'T COME NEAR ME, SIR!

IT'S ME! MAHINDRA!

MAHINDRA!

YES. I WORK IN THIS TOWN. I AM GOING OUT. I WILL BE BACK IN A MINUTE.

MAHINDRA CAME BACK WITH A KAVIRAJ.*

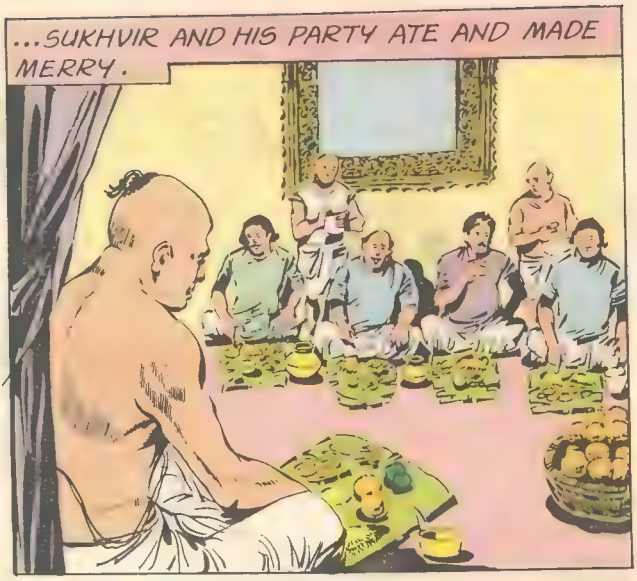
AFTER THE KAVIRAJ HAD EXAMINED RAGHAV—

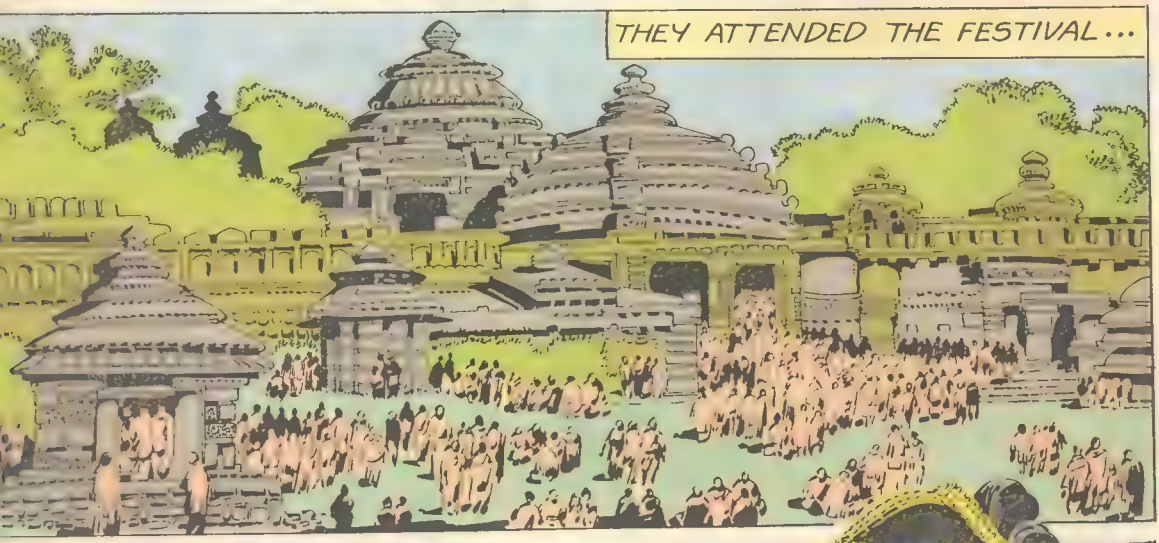
A VERY BAD CASE. HE NEEDS CONSTANT ATTENTION.

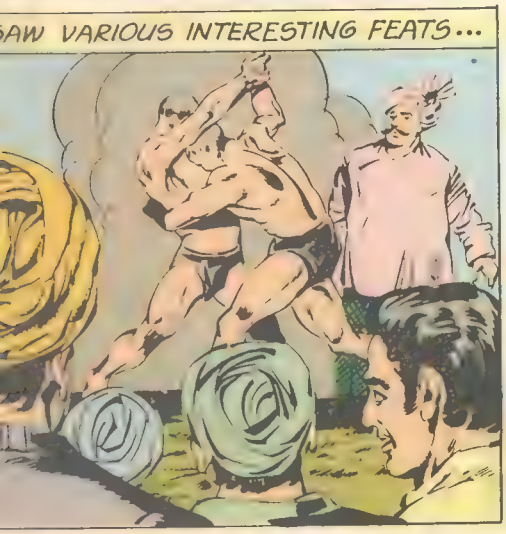
I WILL GIVE IT.

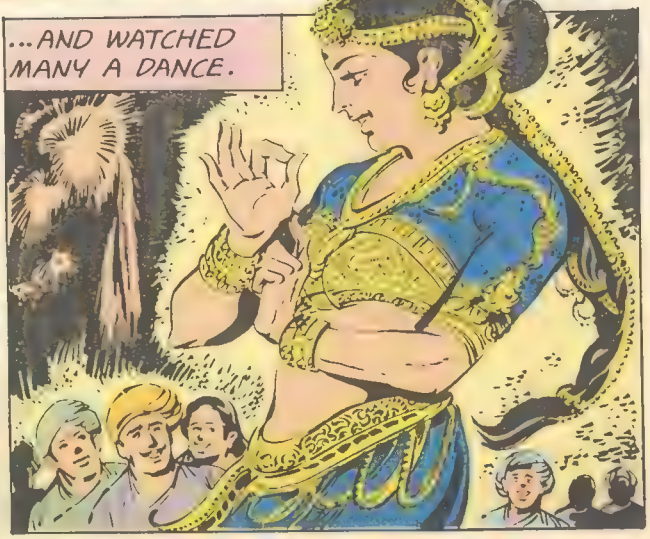
* A PHYSICIAN WELL-VERSED IN AYURVEDIC MEDICINE.

E MAHINDRA SAT BY THE DELIRIOUS
HAV...


...SUKHVIR AND HIS PARTY ATE AND MADE MERRY.


THEY ATTENDED THE FESTIVAL...


SAW VARIOUS INTERESTING FEATS...


...AND WATCHED MANY A DANCE.

A FEW DAYS LATER, THE PANDIT CAME TO RAGHAV.

WE ARE RETURNING HOME TODAY. BUT DO NOT GRIEVE. ANYONE, WHO DIES HERE, IS GIVEN A DECENT CREMATION I HEAR.

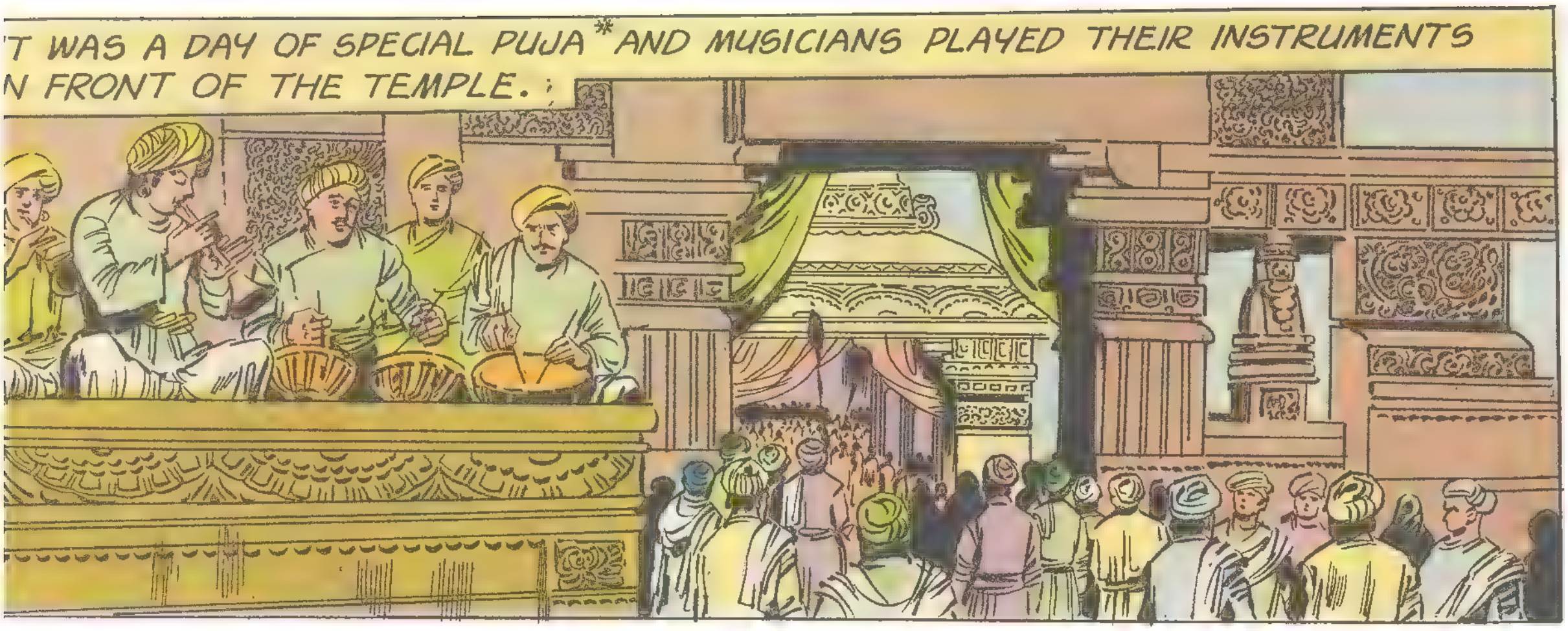
RAGHAV, HOWEVER, DID NOT DIE. WITH MAHINDRA'S DEVOTED CARE, HE WAS SOON WELL ENOUGH TO SIT UP.

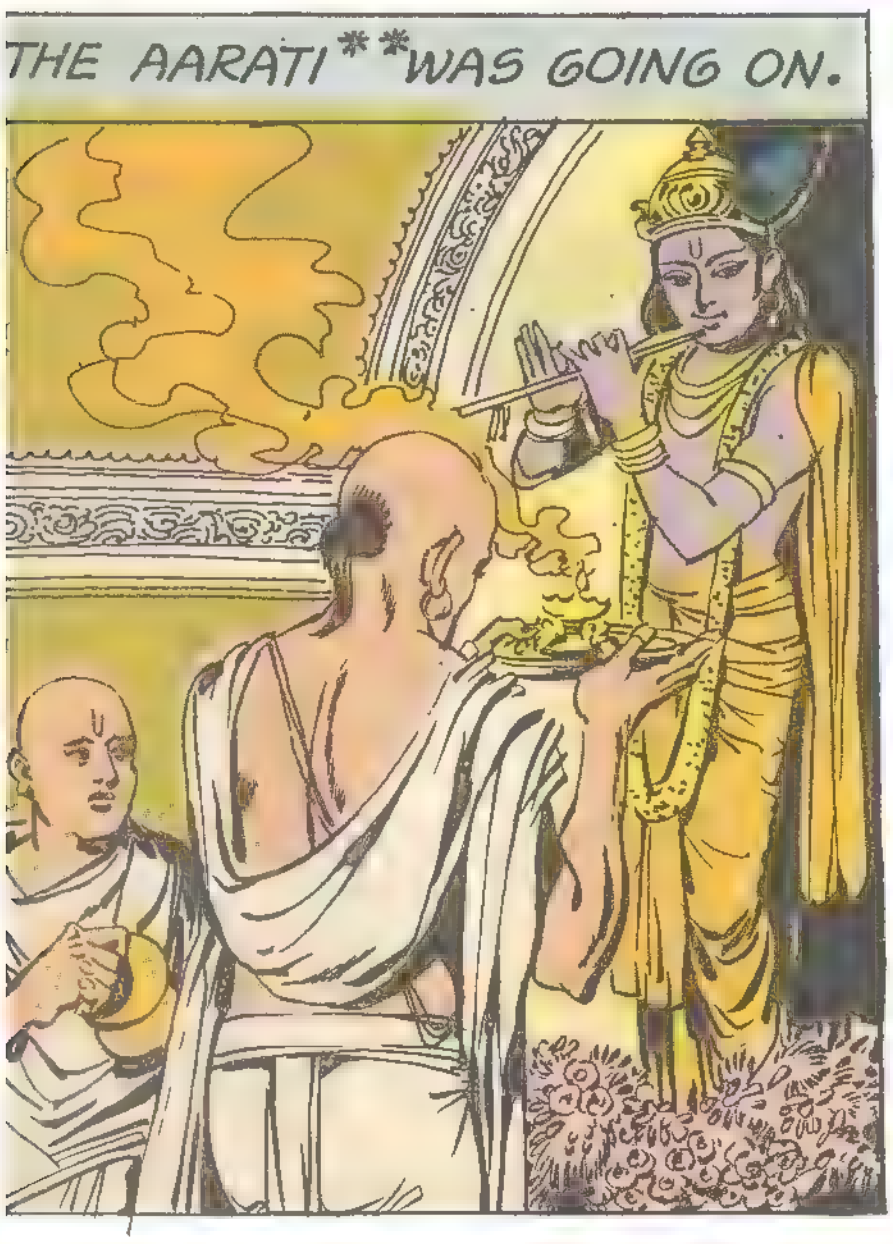
HOW CRUEL THOSE MEN WERE.

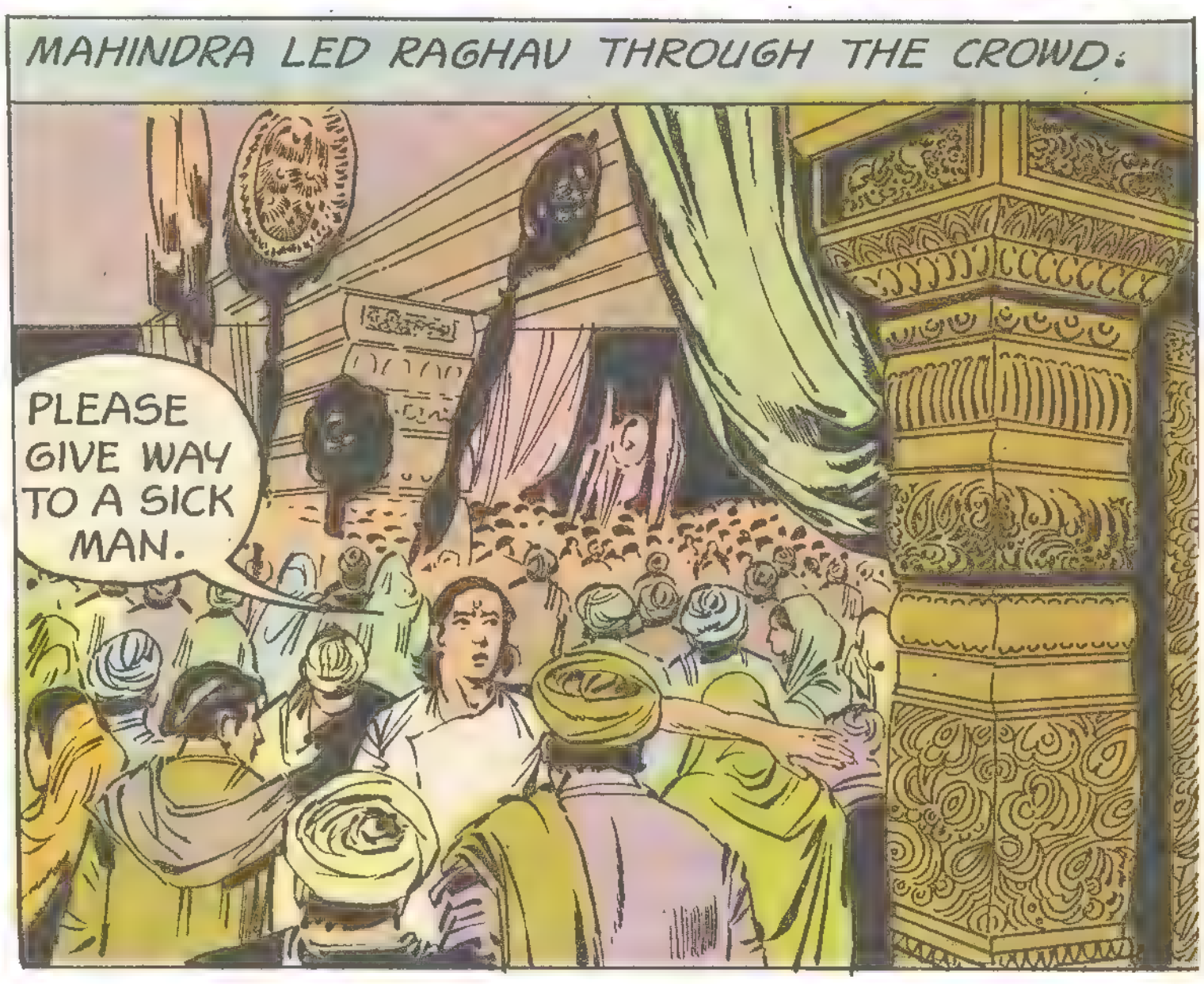
NEVER MIND. THE LORD TOOK CARE OF YOU.

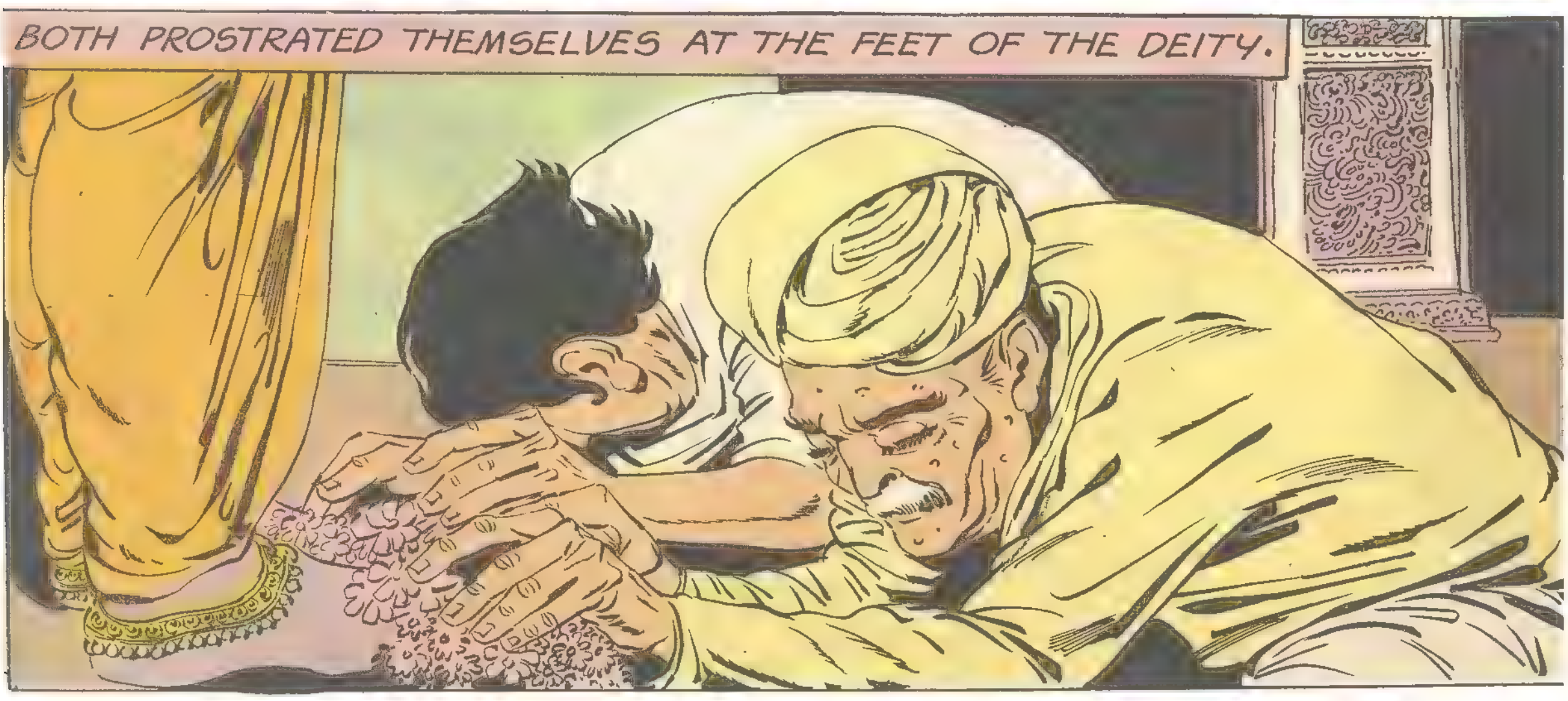
YOU ARE RIGHT, MY SON. WHAT A PITY, I HAVEN'T YET BEEN TO SEE THE LORD.

I WILL TAKE YOU TO HIS TEMPLE. NOW.









* RITUAL WORSHIP OF A DEITY ** THE CONCLUDING RITE OF THE WORSHIP.

RAGHAV WAS DELIGHTED.

I WONDER HOW I WILL EVER REPAY HIM!

YES, I KNOW HOW.

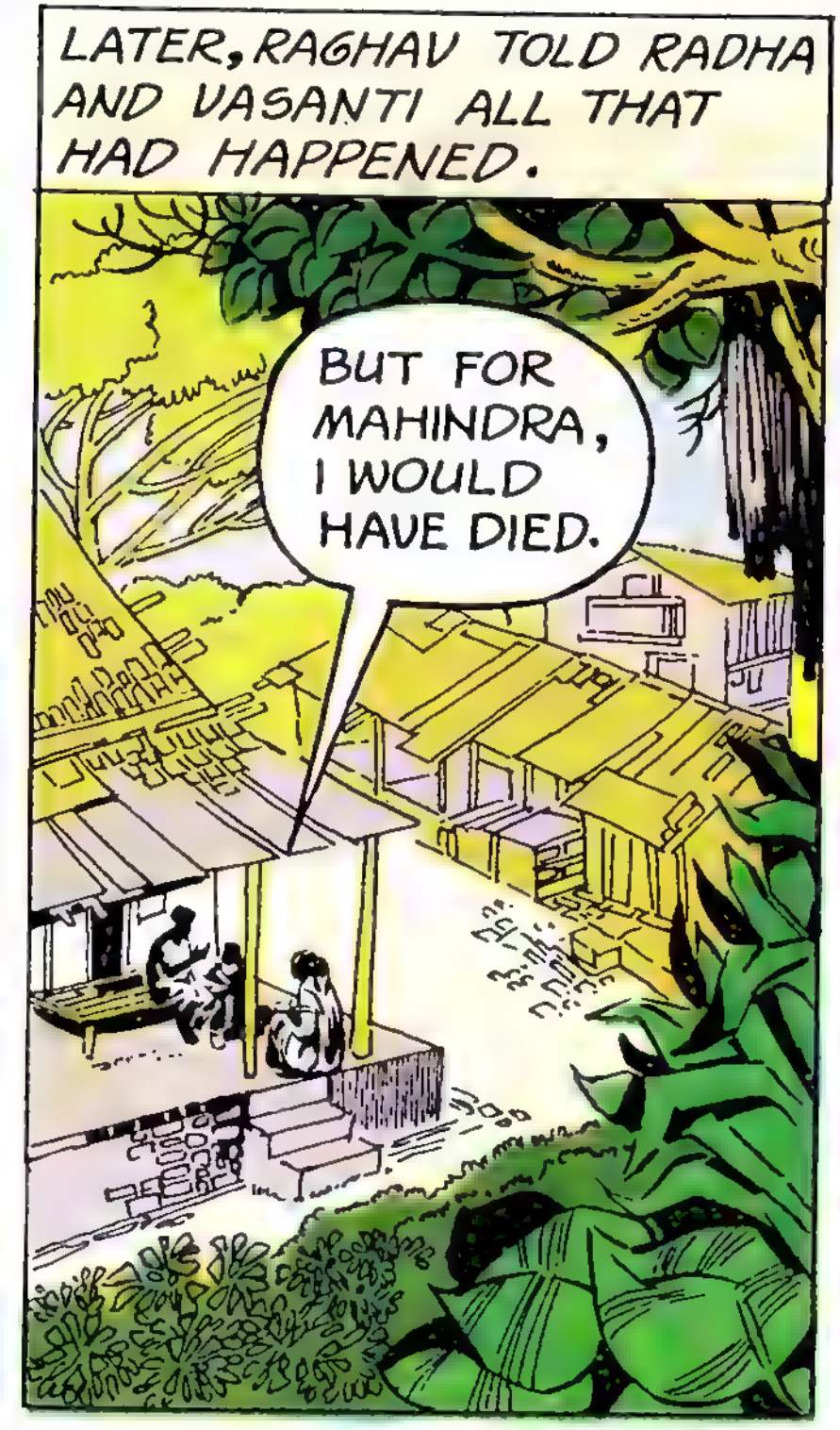
MAHINDRA, COME BACK WITH ME. I SHALL MAKE YOU MY SON-IN-LAW.

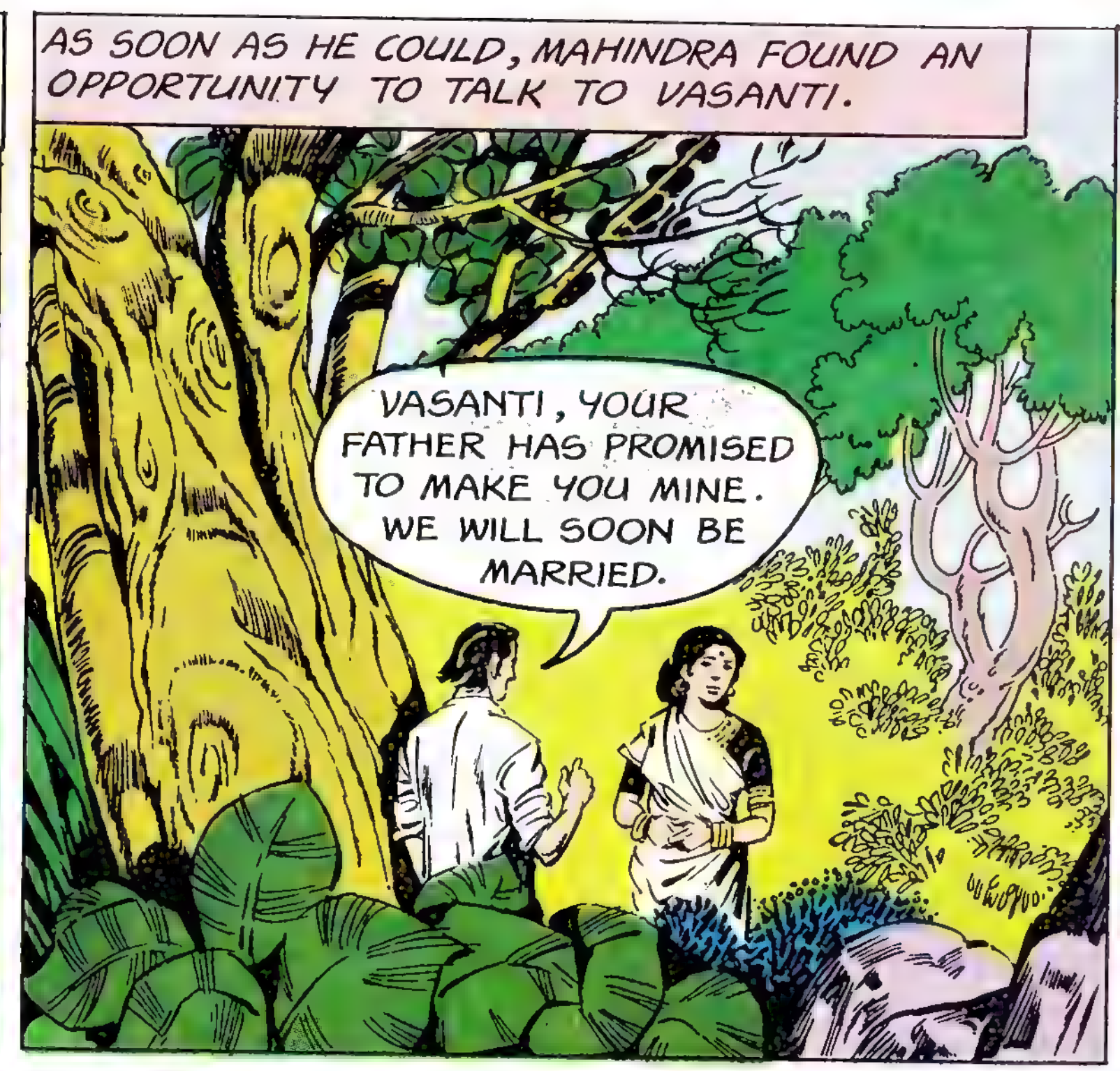
MAHINDRA COULD NOT BELIEVE THAT HIS LONG-CHERISHED DREAM WAS ABOUT-TO COME TRUE.

A FEW DAYS LATER, MAHINDRA AND RAGHAV LEFT FOR THEIR VILLAGE.

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE VILLAGE, THEY MET RADHABAI AND VASANTI.

THEY SOON REACHED THE VILLAGE. SOME WERE HAPPY TO SEE RAGHAV, OTHERS WERE NOT.

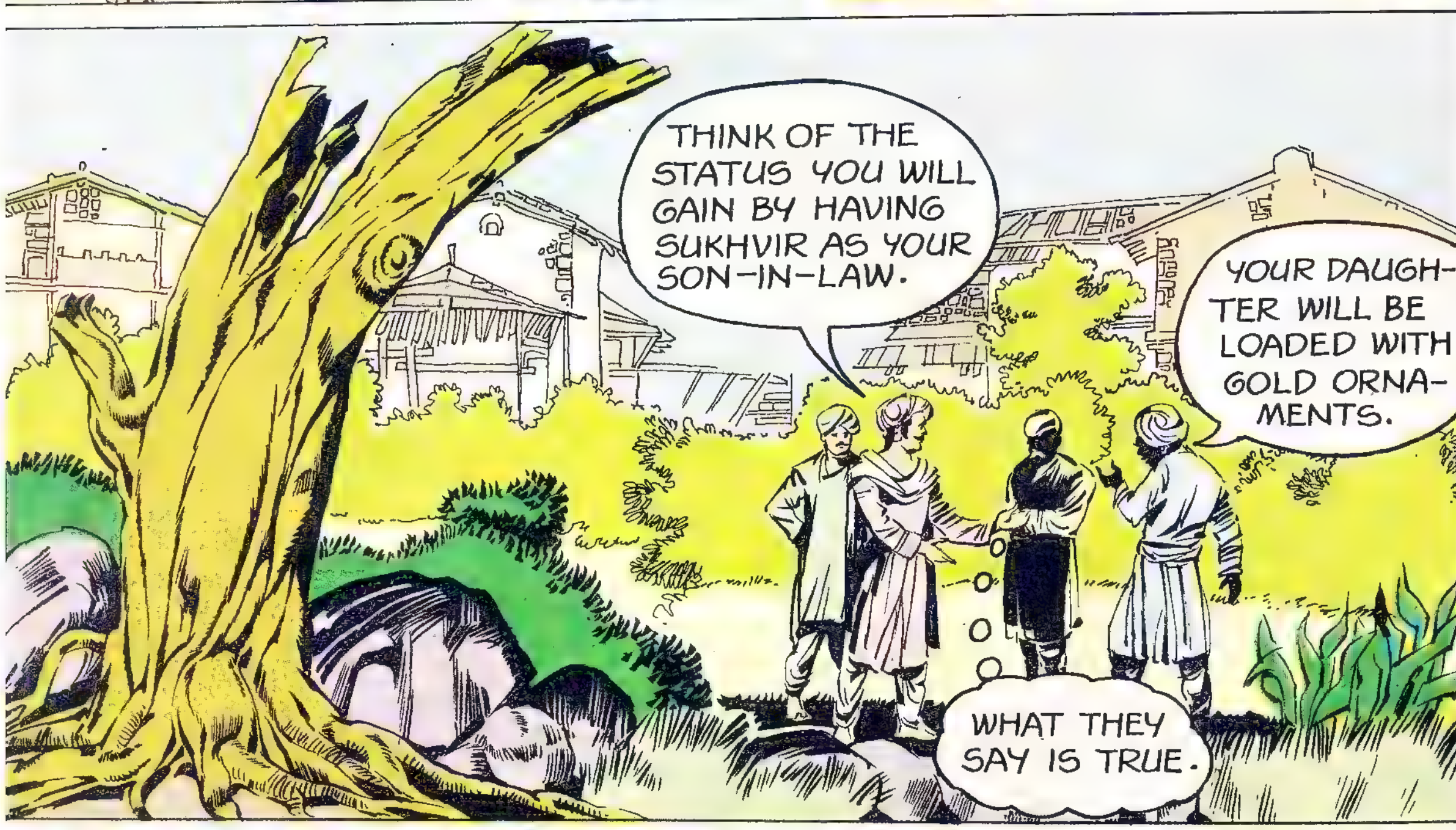

LATER, RAGHAV TOLD RADHA AND VASANTI ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED.
BUT FOR MAHINDRA, I WOULD HAVE DIED.


AS SOON AS HE COULD, MAHINDRA FOUND AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO VASANTI.
VASANTI, YOUR FATHER HAS PROMISED TO MAKE YOU MINE. WE WILL SOON BE MARRIED.

A FEW DAYS LATER, SUKHVIR HAPPENED TO SEE VASANTI.
ISN'T THAT RAGHAV'S DAUGHTER? I MUST REMIND THE PANDIT TO SEE RAGHAV AGAIN.

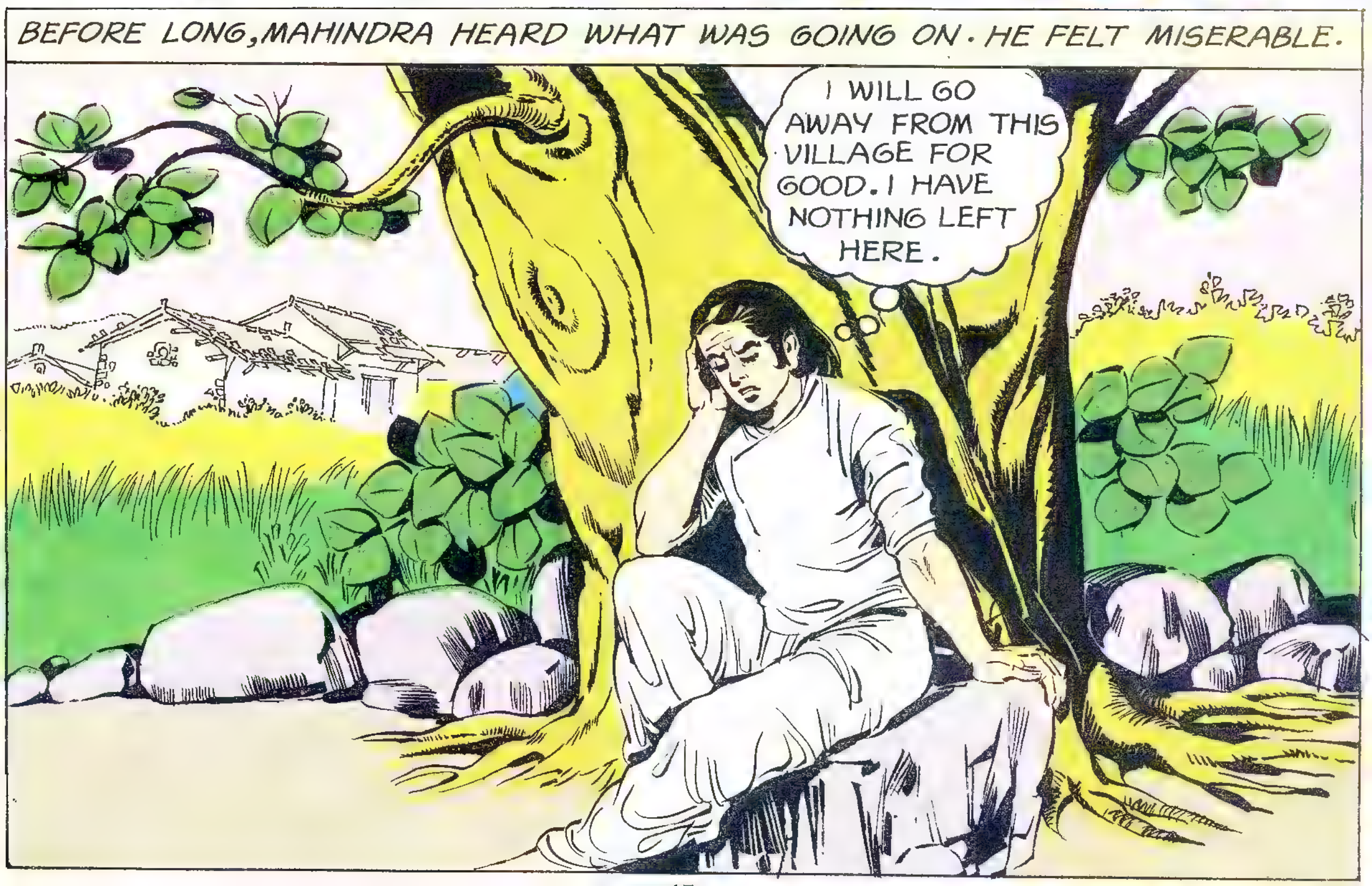
THE PANDIT DULY APPROACHED RAGHAV.
I'M SORRY. I'VE PROMISED MY DAUGHTER TO MAHINDRA.

SUKHVIR'S FLATTERERS TRIED TO PERSUADE RAGHAV TO CHANGE HIS MIND.



PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE INFLUENCED BY SUKHVIR'S MEN.
VASANTI SHALL MARRY SUKHVIR!

MEANWHILE, SUKHVIR REDOUBLED HIS EFFORTS TO PLEASE RAGHAV.
SUKHVIRJI SENDS YOU THESE GIFTS AS A TOKEN OF HIS REGARD FOR YOU.


BEFORE LONG, MAHINDRA HEARD WHAT WAS GOING ON. HE FELT MISERABLE.
I WILL GO AWAY FROM THIS VILLAGE FOR GOOD. I HAVE NOTHING LEFT HERE.

AS HE WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE —

MAHINDRA! WAIT! YOU ARE BEING WRONGED. YOU MUST APPEAL TO THE PANCHAYAT.

HOW CAN I DISGRACE RAGHAVJI BEFORE THE ENTIRE VILLAGE? NO, MOTHER. I WON'T. I CAN'T.

DOES MY DAUGHTER'S HAPPINESS MEAN NOTHING TO YOU? SHE WILL SURELY DIE IF SHE IS FORCED TO MARRY SUKHVIR. ONLY YOU CAN SAVE HER AND YOU MUST.

MAHINDRA NO LONGER HAD ANY DOUBTS. HE WENT TO SEE THE VILLAGE CHIEF AND TOLD HIM THE WHOLE STORY.

...AND RAGHAV IS NOW GOING BACK ON HIS WORD. ALL RIGHT, WE WILL SUMMON THE PANCHAYAT.

AT THE PANCHAYAT —

...AND HE PROMISED TO MAKE ME HIS SON-IN-LAW.

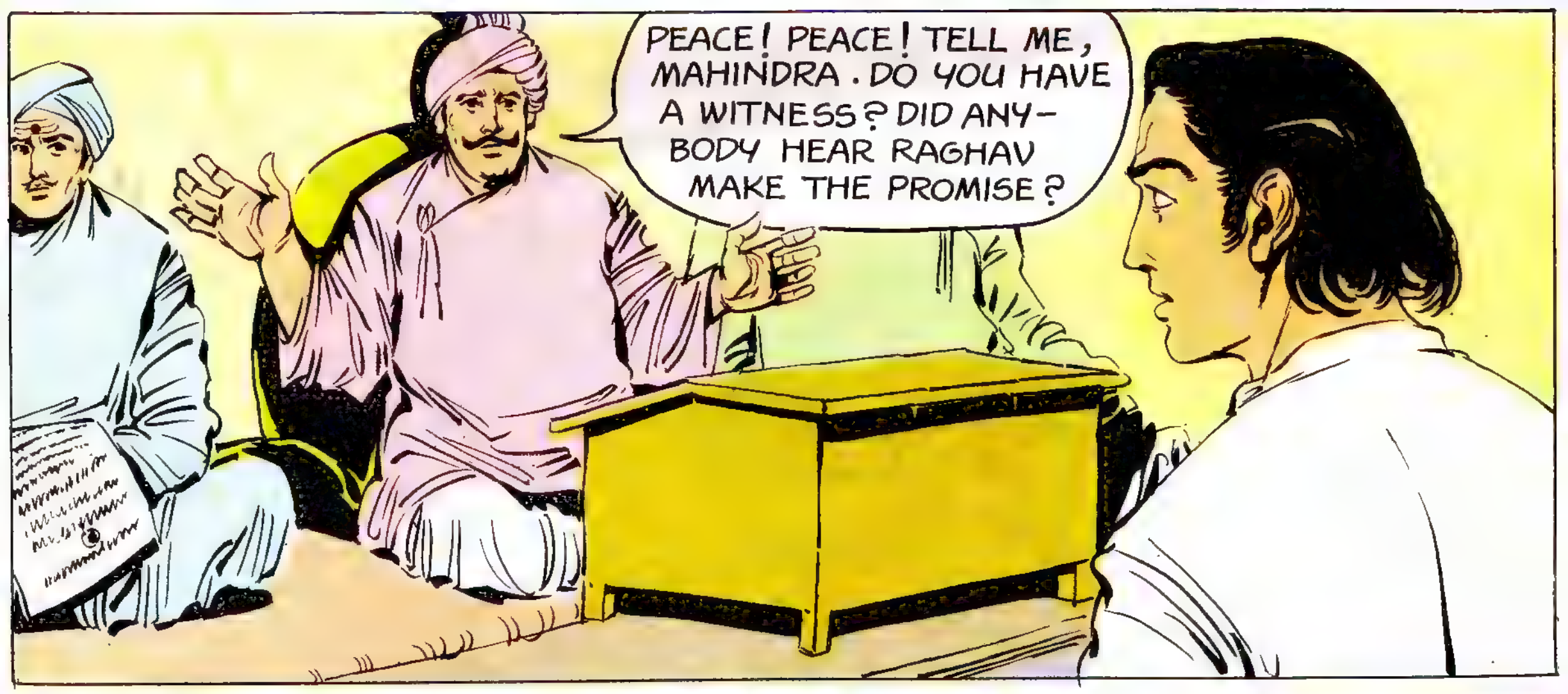
IT'S A LIE. I MADE NO SUCH PROMISE.

WHOM SHOULD WE BELIEVE?

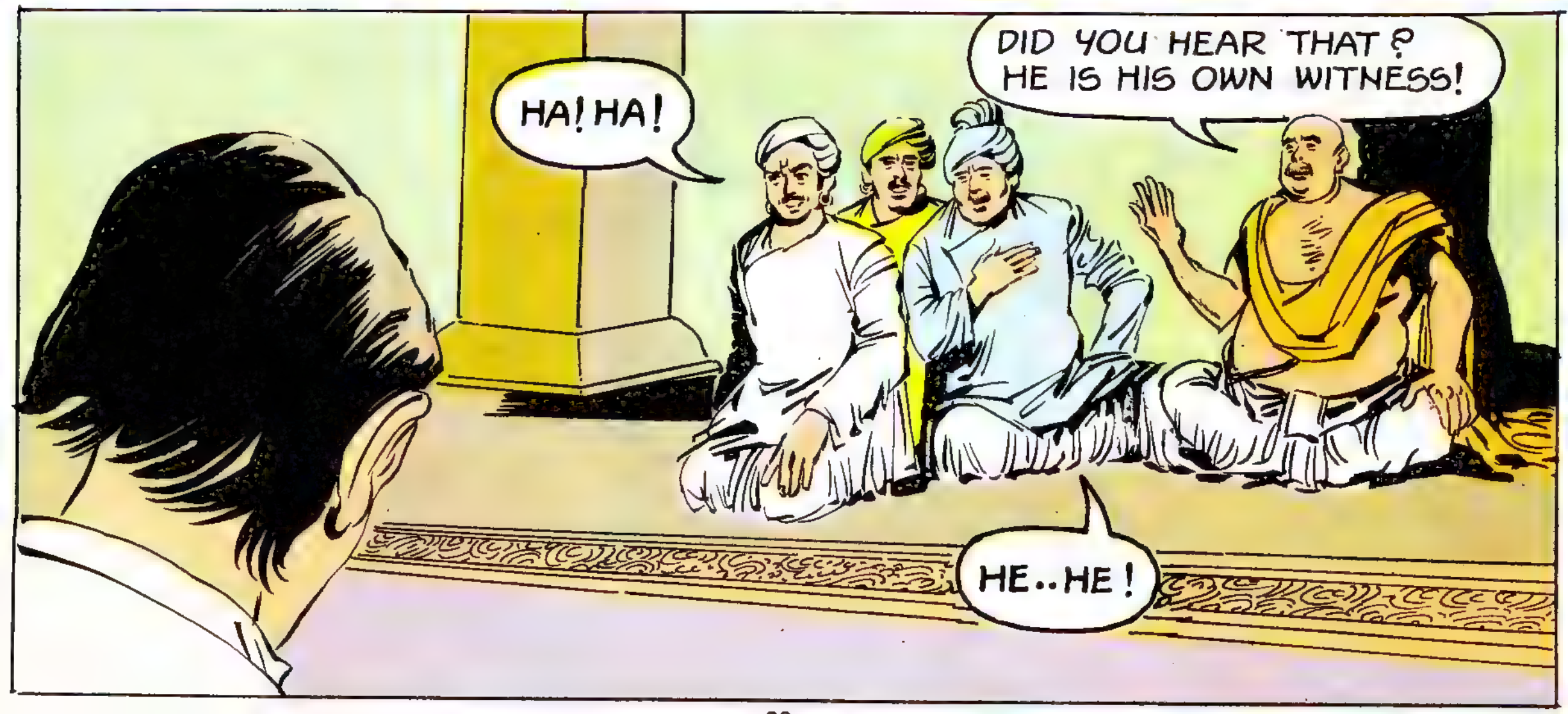
RAGHAV, OF COURSE! HE IS OLD AND HONEST.

I AM SORRY TO HAVE TO SAY THIS. HE IS OLD, BUT NOT HONEST.

HOW DARE YOU INSULT ME?


PEACE! PEACE! TELL ME, MAHINDRA. DO YOU HAVE A WITNESS? DID ANYBODY HEAR RAGHAV MAKE THE PROMISE?

I DID! THE PROMISE WAS MADE TO ME!


HA! HA!
DID YOU HEAR THAT? HE IS HIS OWN WITNESS!
HE..HE!

MAHINDRA SUDDENLY REMEMBERED SOMETHING.

DON'T LAUGH, GENTLEMEN. LORD GOPALA TOO MUST HAVE HEARD RAGHAVJI'S PROMISE.

LORD GOPALA? THEN WHY DON'T YOU ASK HIM TO COME HERE AND TESTIFY.

HA! HA!

HO! HI!

HA! HA!

HA! HA!

THIS IS TOO MUCH TO BEAR. BUT IF DIE I MUST, I SHALL DIE AT THE FEET OF THE LORD.

THAT VERY DAY, MAHINDRA LEFT THE VILLAGE FOR THE TEMPLE TOWN.

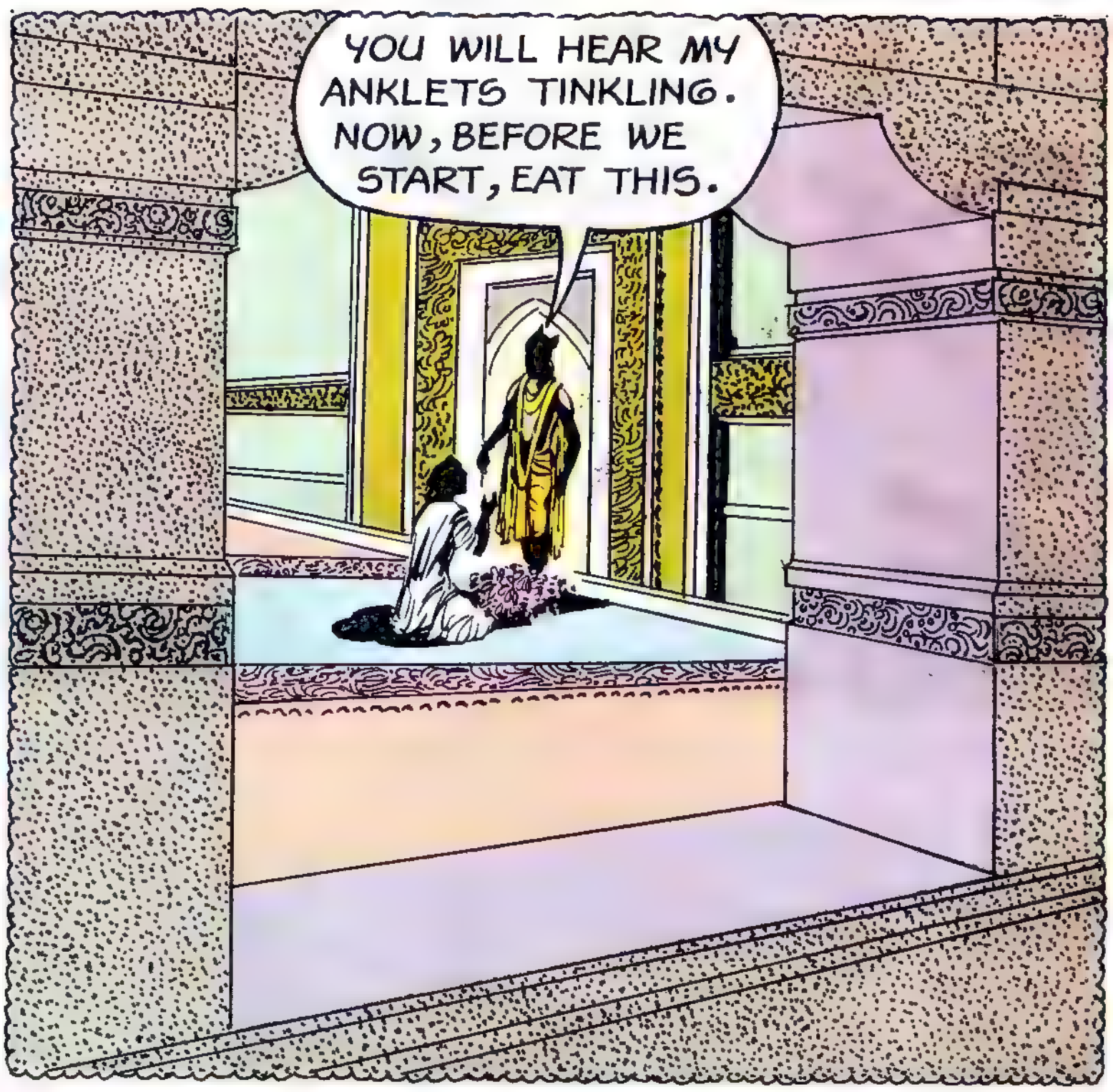
WHEN HE REACHED THE TEMPLE, EXHAUSTED, HE FELL ASLEEP ON THE STEPS.

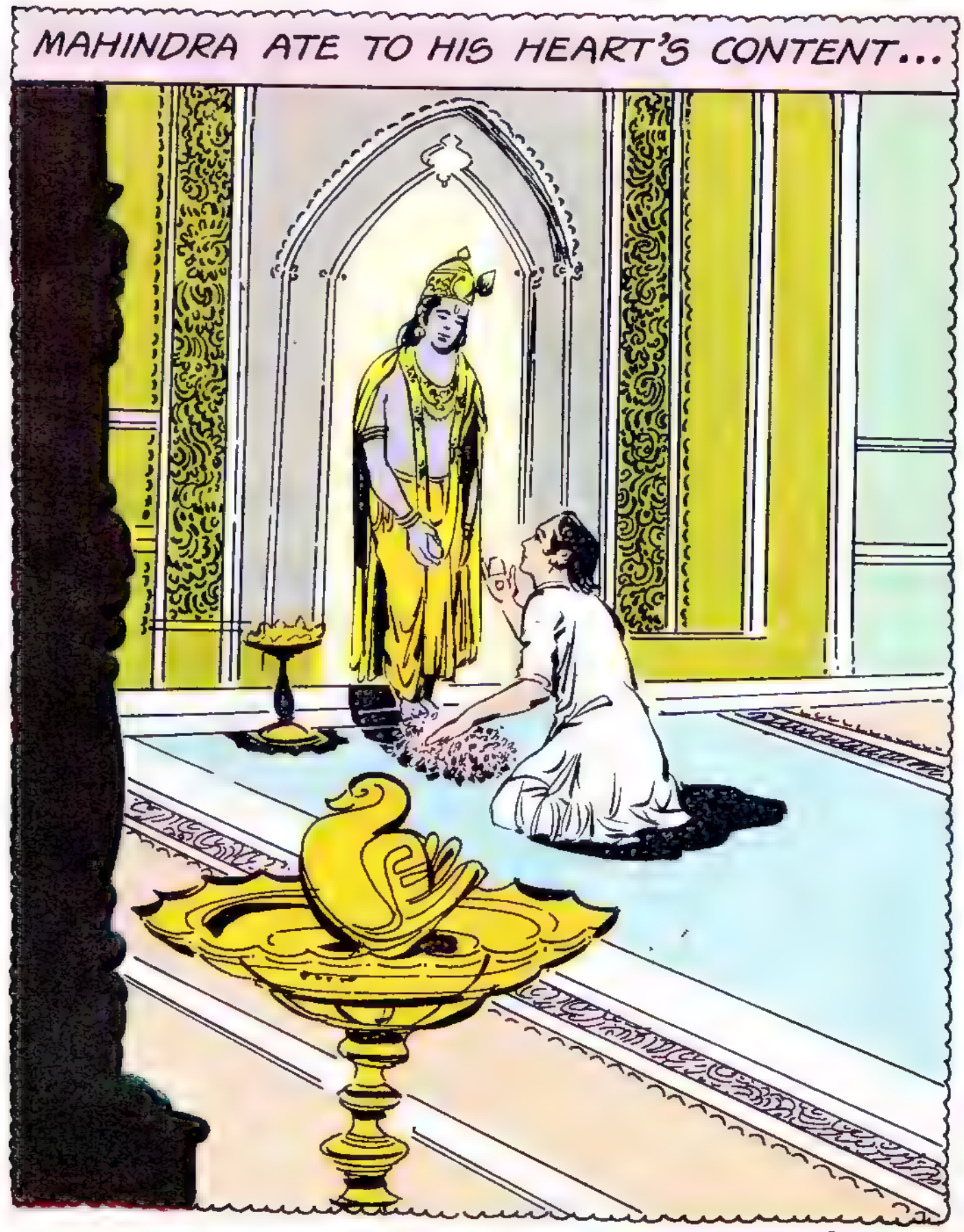
THE LORD APPEARED.

LORD, PLEASE COME TO MY VILLAGE AS MY WITNESS. ONLY IF YOU AGREE, CAN VASANTI BE SAVED.

I WILL COME, MAHINDRA. YOU WALK AHEAD. I SHALL FOLLOW. BUT YOU MUST NEVER LOOK BACK.

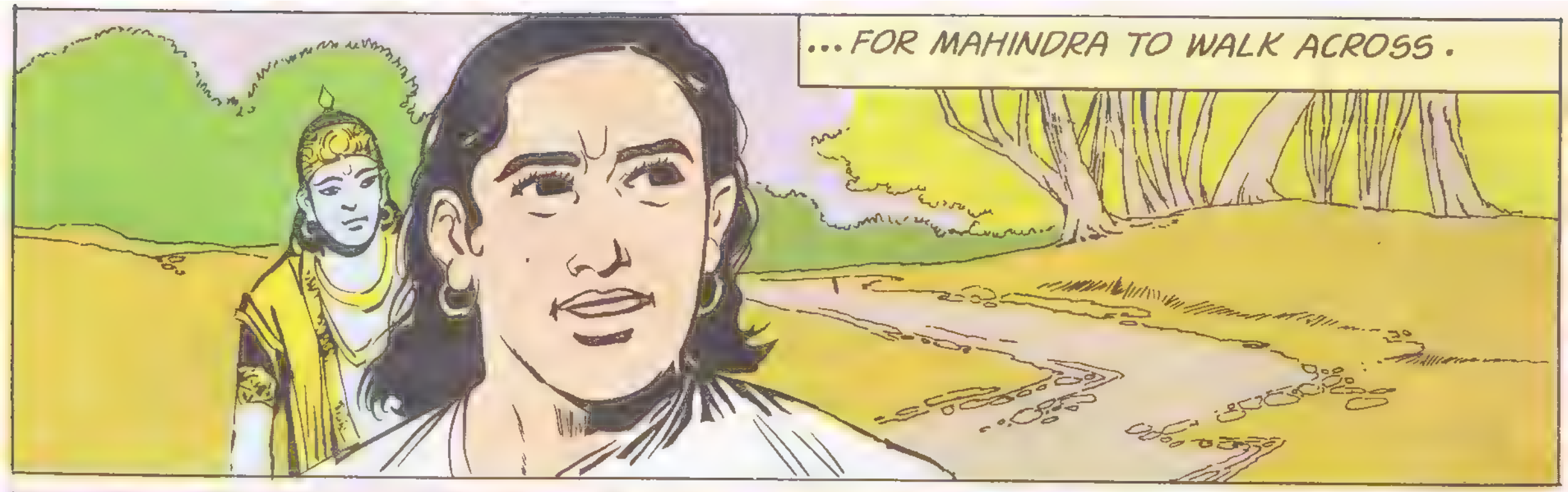
IF I DON'T, HOW WILL I KNOW THAT YOU ARE FOLLOWING ME?

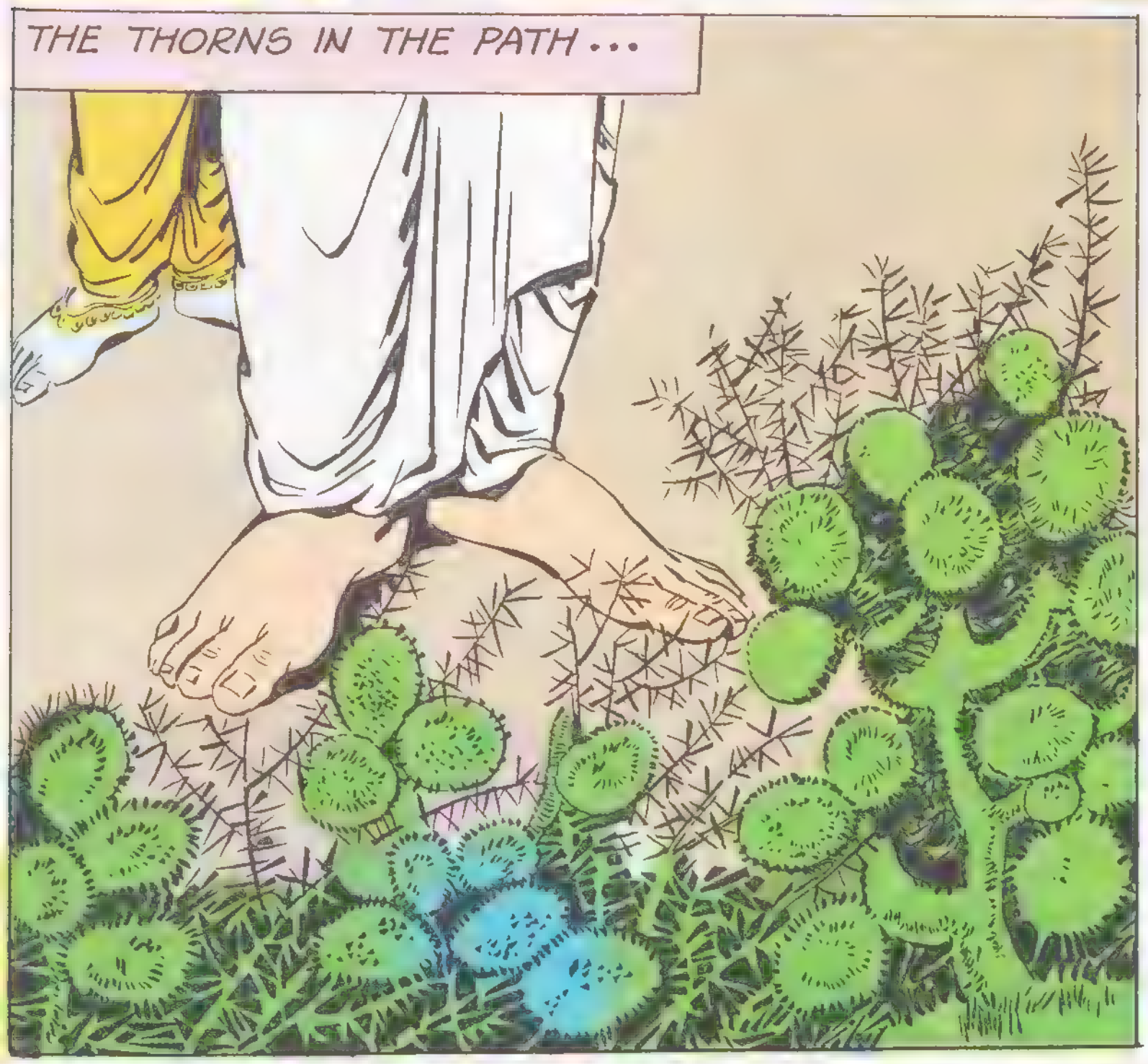

YOU WILL HEAR MY ANKLETS TINKLING. NOW, BEFORE WE START, EAT THIS.


MAHINDRA ATE TO HIS HEART'S CONTENT...

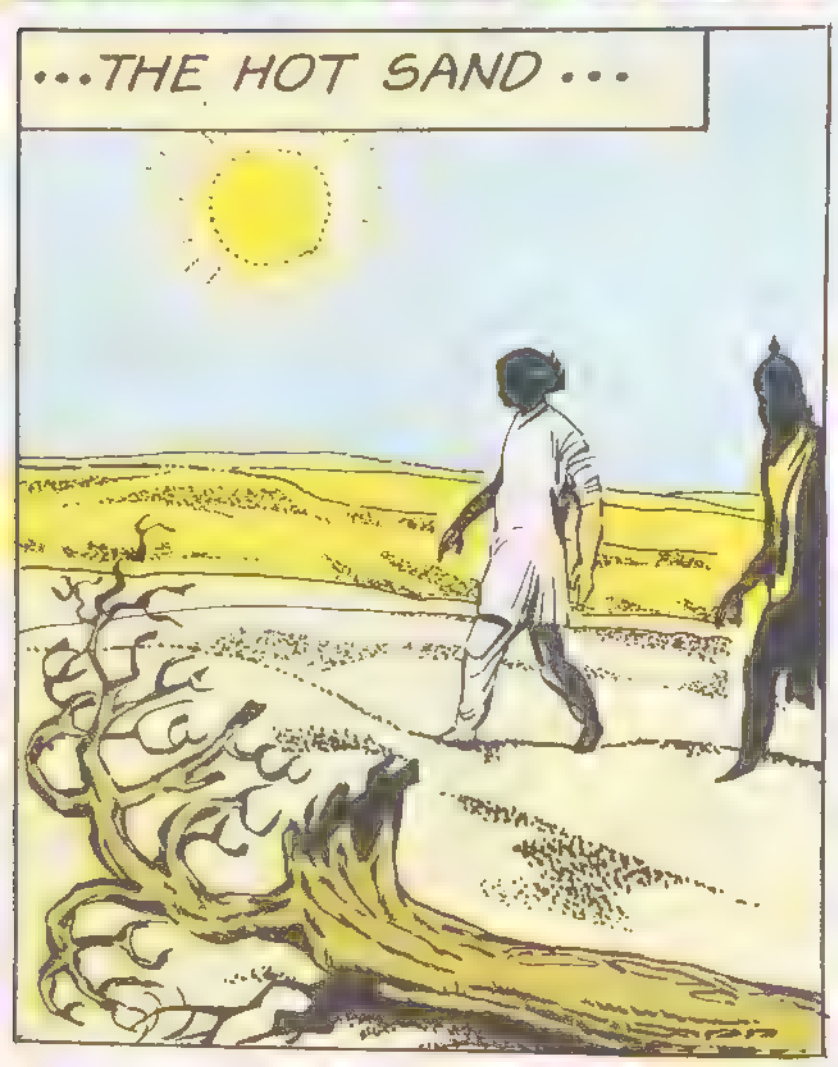
...AND THEN WOKE UP, REFRESHED AND INVIGORATED.

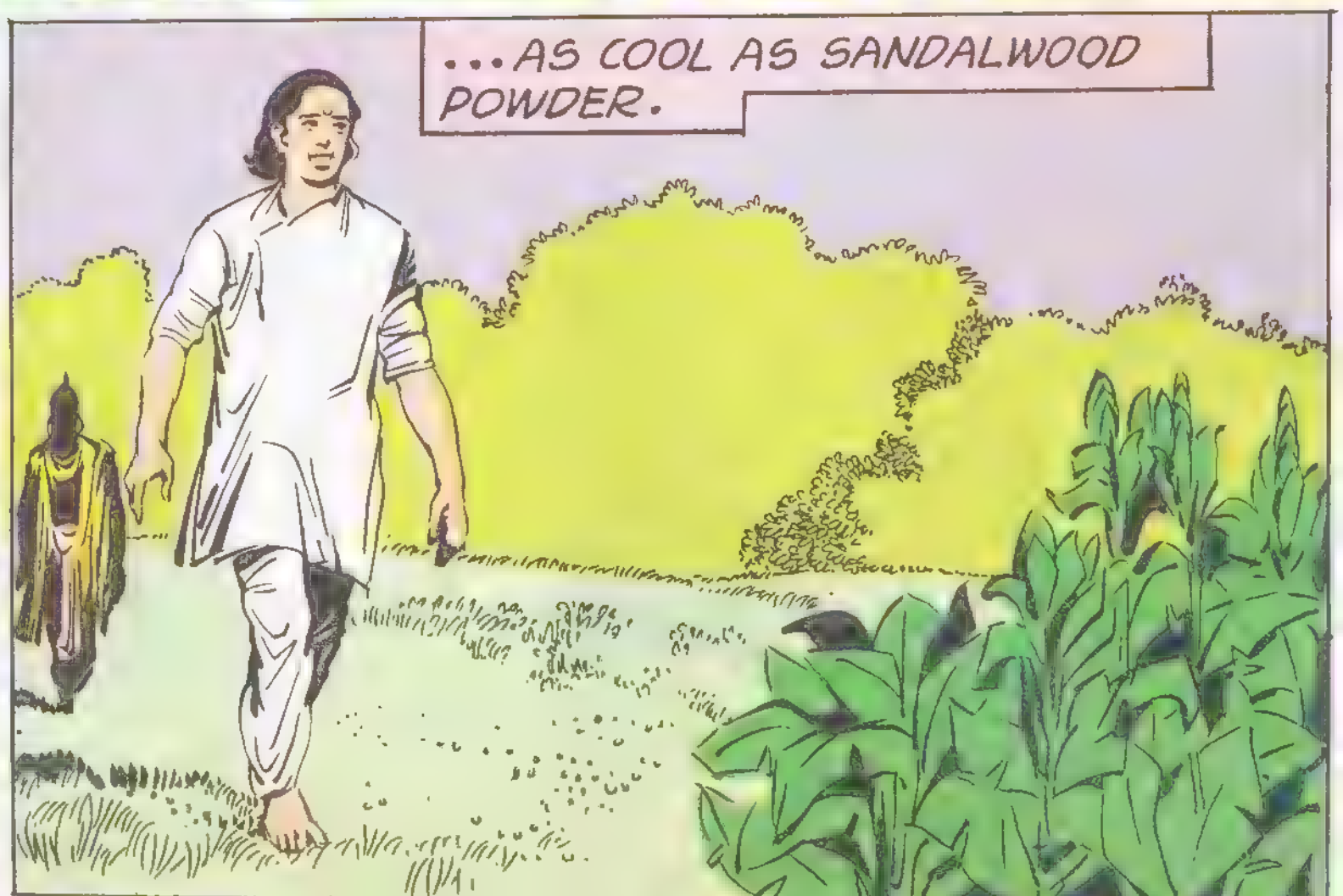
THE JOURNEY WAS LONG AND ARDUOUS. SOMETIMES, THERE WOULD BE A MOUNTAIN IN THEIR PATH.
BUT AS MAHINDRA LOOKED HELPLESSLY AT IT...
...IT WOULD PART, AND HE WOULD GO ON.
EVEN THE RIVERS AND STREAMS WOULD MAKE WAY...


...FOR MAHINDRA TO WALK ACROSS.


THE THORNS IN THE PATH...

...BECAME SOFT FLOWERS AND...


...THE HOT SAND...


...AS COOL AS SANDALWOOD POWDER.

A FEW DAYS LATER, JUST WHEN MAHINDRA WAS ABOUT TO REACH HIS VILLAGE, HE PAUSED.

I CANNOT HEAR THE TINKLE OF HIS ANKLETS. HAS THE LORD DESERTED ME?

HE TURNED AROUND TO LOOK AND THERE WAS THE LORD – TURNED INTO STONE.

MAHINDRA REALISED THAT THE TINKLE OF THE ANKLETS HAD BEEN MUFFLED BECAUSE SAND HAD GOT INTO THEM.

PARDON ME FOR LOSING FAITH, O LORD. PLEASE FOLLOW ME.

BUT THE IDOL REMAINED ROOTED TO THE SPOT.

MAHINDRA BECAME DESPERATE.

I MUST RUN AND TELL EVERYBODY ABOUT THIS.

HE RAN TO THE VILLAGE.

COME AND SEE! THE LORD HAS COME!

THE VILLAGERS WERE WONDER-STRUCK WHEN THEY SAW THAT WHAT MAHINDRA CLAIMED WAS TRUE.

THE LORD HAS INDEED COME TO BEAR WITNESS AND VINDICATE HIS DEVOTEE.

THE VILLAGE CHIEF CONFRONTED RAGHAV.

DO YOU STILL DARE TO CALL MAHINDRA A LIAR?

RAGHAV WAS CONTRITE.

I HAVE SINNED. I DID PROMISE TO MAKE THE ORPHAN MY SON-IN-LAW.

THE VILLAGE CHIEF EMBRACED MAHINDRA.

LONG LIVE GOPALJI.

WHO SAYS MAHINDRA IS AN ORPHAN ? I ADOPT THIS TRUTHFUL BOY AS MY SON.

LONG LIVE MAHINDRA!

RAGHAV SOUGHT OUT SUKHVIR.

SUKHVIR, I CANNOT ACCEPT YOUR PROPOSAL FOR MY DAUGHTER.

EVEN IF YOU DID, I WOULDN'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO MARRY HER! THE LORD HAS GIVEN HER TO MAHINDRA.

FOR ALL, IT WAS A DAY OF GREAT WONDER; FOR MAHINDRA AND VASANTI, A DAY OF GREAT JOY.

NOTHING WILL EVER COME IN OUR WAY NOW. THE LORD HIMSELF WANTS US TO BE UNITED.

VASANTI LOOKED EXTREMELY CHARMING AS A BRIDE.

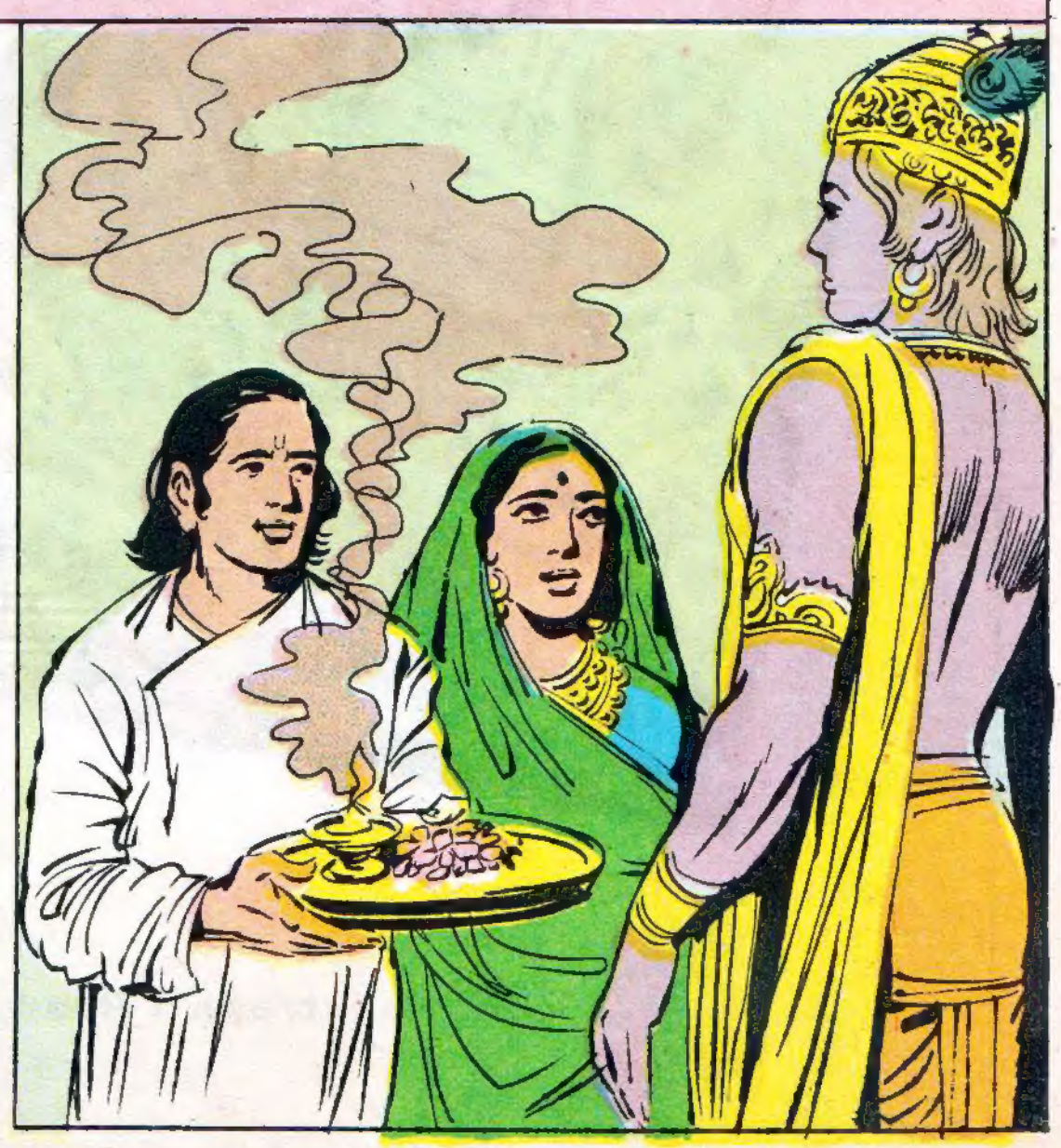
THE VILLAGE CHIEF TOOK THE PLACE OF MAHINDRA'S FATHER.

PANDITJI! WOULD YOU ACT AS THE PRIEST?

IF MAHINDRA AGREES, IT WOULD BE THE PROUDEST MOMENT OF MY LIFE!

MAHINDRA OF COURSE AGREED AND THE CEREMONY WAS SOON PERFORMED.

AT A MEETING OF THE VILLAGERS, THE CHIEF PROPOSED THAT A TEMPLE BE BUILT AROUND THE STONE IMAGE OF GOPAL AND SINCE GOPAL HAD COME THERE AS A WITNESS, HE BE CALLED SAKSHIGOPAL*. AND SINCE MAHINDRA BROUGHT HIM, HE SHOULD BE THE PRIEST OF THAT TEMPLE. ALL AGREED AND MAHINDRA AND VASANTI LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.



* GOPAL THE WITNESS.

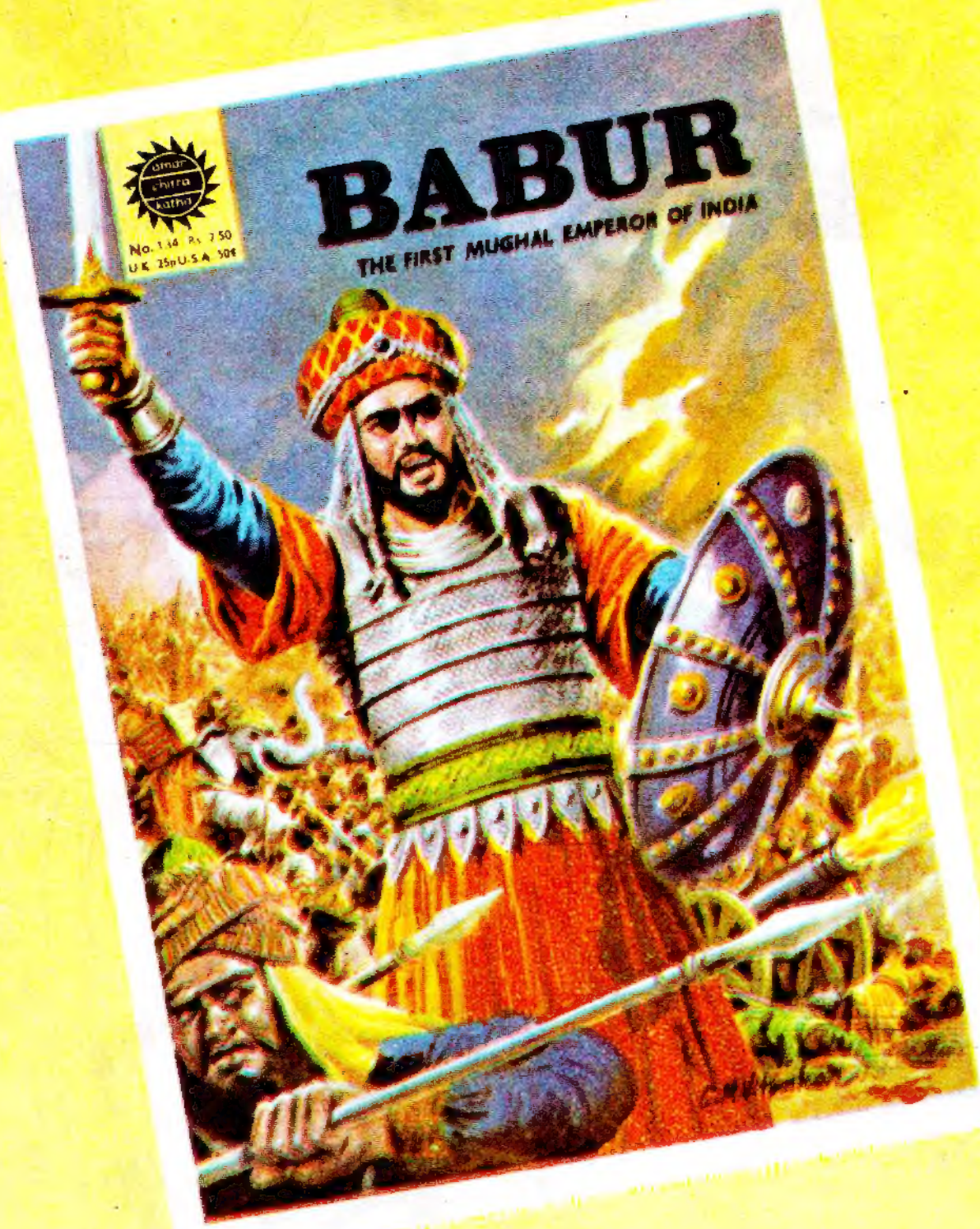
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

HISTORY

MYTHOLOGY

LEGEND

Acquaint your children with their cultural heritage



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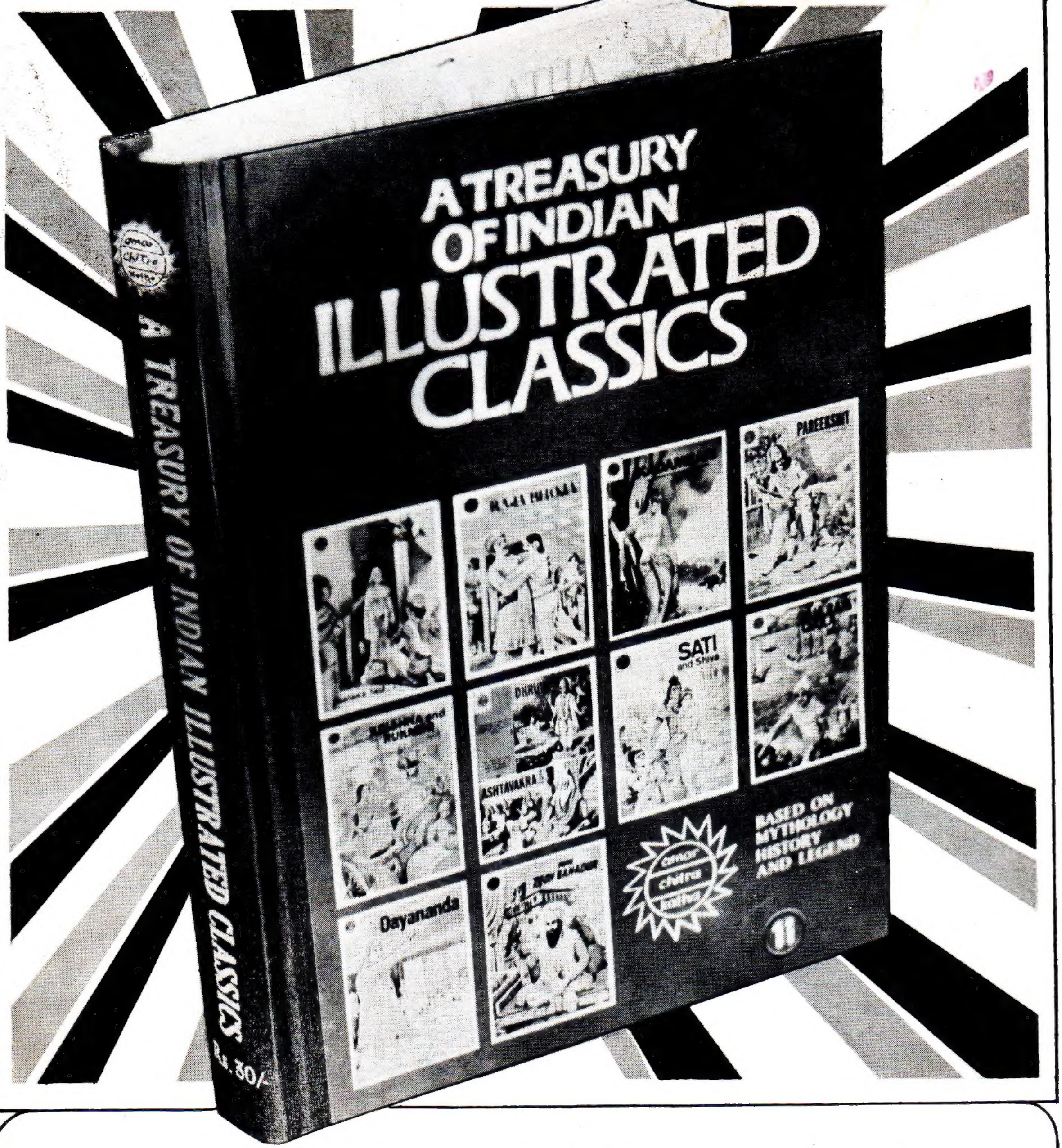

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